



# THOUGHTS AND FANCIES

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*by*  
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# POLITICAL

## POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

THERE are various classes of mankind who seem peculiarly capable of exciting the resentment, or, it may be, the professed contempt of their fellow-citizens. Clergymen, lawyers, medical men, appear at all times to have their instinctive enemies, and to them may now be added politicians, if constant allusions in current writings be good evidence of popular opinion. Ignorance, incompetence, mendacity, low craft, selfish indifference to higher interests, and sometimes actual financial corruption, such are among the allegations freely launched, albeit in such general terms that no retribution in the courts can follow. If, however, there be any one who wishes to judge fairly the class impugned, it behoves him to learn something of the conditions under which they have to work.

Now, politics implies the business of governing, and governing means the art of steering, both in letter and in fact. Further, steering implies wind, waves, and rocks, and the success of the steersman or captain depends on the

capacity of his rudder, his engines, and his crew. Neither theoretical knowledge, nor courage, nor will-power will bring a ship into harbour of itself. Navigation is a complicated and applied science, but in the application of his art to his end the captain of a ship enjoys the singular advantage of an absolute control over the men and the machinery that serve him. Far otherwise is it with the captains of most Ships of State in modern times. Louis XIV. of France may have said with truth, "I am the State"; Mussolini or Stalin may think it now; but most rulers know only too painfully that they govern only by the capricious consents of many persons and divers interests under many forms. And just as the servants of an autocrat watch anxiously for his frown or smile, so do the Ministers of a democracy note the moods of that public opinion on which their reign in the end depends. Both the names, courtier and politician, have come to possess an ill connotation, and individuals of either class may be unprincipled or timid, but neither, of whatever character or courage, can be indifferent to the humours of those with whom the power immediately or ultimately lies.

In Great Britain the ultimate power lies with the huge mass of adults who are voters, the immediate power with the House of Commons,

subject to certain checks and delays. Therefore the chief Minister of the King, who is the active ruler of the nation, depends upon the House of Commons, and as that body has 615 members he must be sure of the constant goodwill of 308 of them, or with a working margin of safety—let us say 330—so that there are always 330 persons before his eyes whom he must not seriously offend, nay, whom he must call upon day after day to give him constant and laborious service. His position is that of a battalion commander were the Army Act suspended. He must rule by exhorting and humouring his men, or he is lost. And again, behind each of the 330 are tens of thousands of men and women on whom, perforce, his eye in turn must rest. Each of them has a share of power, though many are strangely indifferent as to its exercise. If, however, even a small fraction of them become really excited on some question, the reaction on their representatives is felt at once. And if this excitement occurs in a considerable number of the seats held by the 330, the leader of the 330 cannot ignore it.

Now, of course, it may be said that the leader of a Party, who is also Prime Minister, should go right ahead with the policy he thinks right regardless of consequences. On a really vital issue this is so ; but observe the dilemma in

which he is placed. If only a small number of the 330 desert him, not only does he lose on the immediate issue, but he sets back a number of causes dear to his followers and perhaps puts men into power whose policy he may firmly believe to be disastrous to the nation. Be he the most conscientious of men, he must ask himself whether to take the particular risk may not conflict with his duty as a whole.

There are few vital issues in politics where a great moral obligation stands out so clear that all other considerations may be ignored. The saving of Belgium was certainly a case, and I think I could find others, though less indisputable ; but the usual political question involves a balance of advantages or a choice of evils. Lord Milner's famous expression, " Damn consequences," was perhaps the most unfortunate of that great public servant's life. I can see no governing principle in politics save expediency ; but an expediency subject to the Ten Commandments. To erect into an immutable principle the continuance, say, of Free Trade or of an hereditary Second Chamber is to confuse the means and end. A political leader ought not to be wedded to any maxims save the good of his country and the moral law. Of course, if he be committed to something of which he repents or which he finds impossible, his only

proper action may be to resign. I should say that in this connection there was a case against Peel on the Corn Duties and against Palmerston on the Danish question. Peel was overborne by the distress of the time and Palmerston by the House of Commons, and perhaps the Court ; but I cannot think that either should have remained in office when so leading a feature of his policy proved impossible to maintain. Pitt's decision on Catholic emancipation affords a far more recent precedent. Be this as it may, however, these instances are striking illustrations of the limits of all Prime Ministers' power.

If it is unjust to judge political leaders on the assumption that they are completely their own masters, it is equally untrue to suppose that they can give to each question as it arises their full, mature, and informed judgment. The physical limitations of English politics are not in the least understood even by the best educated laymen. The calls of constituents, the demand for public speeches, the insistence of deputations, the pressure of departmental work, the long hours and searching interrogations of Parliament, leave far too scanty a time for any Minister to apply himself to independent deliberation and research. Though I have not been in the highest circle of a Government, I think it no rash guess to say that on many

questions a Cabinet is simply forced to accept the view of the Minister principally concerned, and he in turn the opinion of his permanent advisers. It is a matter of time and strength, and flesh, blood, and brains can do no more. Something has got to be decided, and the man who is supposed to know prevails. There was once, I believe, a theory that the Prime Minister kept an eye on the work of each department, but if it was ever more than a theory I doubt if now it exists at all.

The instabilities of Government policy and the want of time for independent thought are both part of the price of democracy. In the eighteenth century the owners of small boroughs were the powers behind the Speaker's chair. Twenty years back it was the National Liberal Federation, reinforced by the Free Church Council. Lately it was the Trade Union Council, and whereas the borough owners acted individually and spasmodically, the Trade Union Council is highly organized, ever-present, and vigilant, and cannot be stroked down by titles or ribbons. So far, happily, there is nothing comparable under the present Administration, though there have been times when the National Union of Conservative Associations seemed to have aspirations to play a like part. Under a Protectionist system there would be a real danger that some per-



manent organization of manufacturing interests, employing and employed, might attain to undue power ; but fortunately it has been the policy of the present Government to prevent this by the establishment of an Independent Tariff Commission whose assent to new duties has to be obtained.

The demands on the time of Members of Parliament have grown greater and greater with the extension of the franchise. Party organizations that were adapted to bodies of 15,000 voters have become quite insufficient for 60,000. Local branches have become semi-independent bodies, and the central councils or executives that might be expected to control them have themselves become large, unwieldy, and difficult to direct. All this means many more people than formerly with a status that gives them a claim on their member, and that claim is often inconsiderately used. The real work of a member is quite lost sight of in the desire to parade him locally, and it is more important for him to go round the fêtes (if possible with a smiling wife) than to sit down to the hard unreported drudgery of the parliamentary daily task. It is by capacity for the former rather than the latter function that at least Conservative organizations too often choose their candidates and judge their members ; and yet, if a member misses an important division

by reason of his presence in one polling district, he will be not forgiven by many of his supporters in the others. Omniscience and omnipotence are expected of the leaders, and ubiquity of the rest.

Such, then, are the present conditions of English politics. The control is in the hands of over-worked and harassed men, who, amid ever-changing situations and difficulties, are never certain of their own power or place. "Who is sufficient for all these things?" it may be asked, and the answer is, inevitably, "No man." If a leader like Lord Balfour or, in his different way, Mr. Baldwin, preserves a cool and detached judgment, is chary of premature commitments and refuses battle on dangerous ground, he may lose the enthusiasm and even the support of his followers; if he obscures issues, like other leaders, with a smoke-screen of facundity, he may carry his point for the moment, but at the cost of lasting and perhaps justified distrust. The strong superman who of his own will-power can rule the country with inflexible decision has no place in the British Constitution, and when such a one did arise in the seventeenth century and broke that Constitution by military force it may perhaps be conceded that he cost too much.

"Enough," it may be said, after the manner of Rasselas, "you have convinced me that no

man can be ruler in England." And yet England must be ruled, is ruled after a fashion, and might be easily worse ruled than now. I have tried to explain the instability of Governments : let me now try to show how they are able to exist at all. In the first place, the great majority of Members of Parliament soon realize that it is only by union and discipline that any real advance can be made. If the Government which they support disappears, their own particular cherished projects will disappear in all likelihood also. Moreover, the rules and practice of the House make it next to impossible for a private member, even with the best of luck, to succeed in getting a Bill of his own passed unless its scope is very narrow or its provisions almost wholly uncontroversial. The result is that members are obliged to look to the Government to carry out their wishes ; but it is clear that the Government will not move unless a large number wish the same thing. If, however, the thing desired is impracticable, unsound, or gravely unpopular, the pressure on the Government is very unlikely to be carried to the breaking point. If it were, not only would the particular project fall, but a great deal else would come down with it.

This brings me to the second point, which is that a party or parties supporting a Government

are always to some extent cemented by fear. The spectre of a premature dissolution is never far away. However much the position of a Member of Parliament may be depreciated by glib writers, it gives a very real status, power, and engrossment of interest which its holders are loth to risk. In France the term of a Parliament is fixed, and Governments rise and fall during its term. In England the breakdown of a Government probably involves an election in which the former majority is almost certain to suffer loss, if not disaster. The dread of defeat is always a potent factor for union in every English House of Commons. This fear is reinforced by a worthier motive. Whatever may be said by cynics, my own experience leads me to assert that the great majority of members have a true sense of responsibility and duty. If they have a sincere attachment to their party it is because they believe that no other could so well conduct the national affairs. They may, indeed, carry their solidarity too far, but their motives in maintaining a united front are largely patriotic. And to patriotism may often be added a real personal loyalty to a leader and resentment of cabals against him.

“But,” it may be said, “is not all this unity bought at the expense of sincerity and conscience? Do not men vote, as the Persians

fought, under the lash ? ” The answer is, first, that a conscientious dilemma arises far less often than might be supposed, for the simple reason that Governments take good care not to offend the convictions of any great number of their followers. In individual cases, however, I should say that the whips always respect the conscientious feelings of their men, if properly informed. What does excite their wrath, and rightly, is that men should give a hostile vote without notice. Of course, if a dangerous number do give notice, the proposal in controversy may be changed or dropped. In all this connection I am speaking according to my knowledge of the Conservative Party, but I have no right to suppose that things are otherwise elsewhere, and I think that cases of gross intolerance (*e.g.* the treatment of Sir Robert Young) will be found due to outside organizations and not to any pressure within the House.

Having said so much, I must add my view that Governments have pressed the principle of solidarity too far as regards their proposals for legislation. Obviously a Government cannot survive a vote of want of confidence passed against them, or if the supplies for the year are denied them by the House of Commons. When, however, it comes to changes in the law I cannot see why an Administration should not be pre-

pared to accept defeat and pass on to the next business. The primary business of a Government is to administer, not to legislate, and their capacity as administrators should not in logic be affected by legislative failures. Members should be free to consider the provisions of a measure on its merits and without regard to the consequences of a hostile vote either to the Government or to themselves. I fancy that in former times there was much greater independence—as witness the transformation of the Education Bill of 1870 ; while again quite lately the exigencies of a minority Government made them accept repeated rebuffs on their proposals—a precedent which, on the whole, I think ought to be followed even by Governments who undoubtedly hold the confidence of a majority of the House.

Nevertheless, there are great difficulties in applying this logical distinction between executive and legislative functions. Nothing can prevent a Government from making any division a matter of confidence if they choose. On the face of the issue it was ridiculous that Lord Rosebery's Government should have resigned on the Cordite snap vote ; but of course they were already at the point of death both from internal and external maladies, and they probably welcomed the opportunity of a decorous exit.

Again, if a Government is repeatedly beaten on its Bills, its followers will grow restless and discontented, and disintegration is likely to set in. In any case, Ministers cannot throw Bills at the House and leave them to take their chance. If the results are not to be chaotic they must guide the measure in its passage, and if guidance is repeatedly rejected it is only natural that the guides should strike. Nevertheless, I would try to establish a canon, to be subscribed to by all political leaders, that defeats on legislation should not normally be fatal. I put forward such a suggestion with Lord Hugh Cecil in 1914 when we served on a Committee on Parliamentary Procedure and Practice, and we got support from the Speaker (Lord Ullswater), but not from the party leaders, and of course the committee and its work were blown out of existence by the hurricane of war.

In considering the House of Commons as a legislative body there remains the very serious problem of the growth of obstruction and the counter-measures it has occasioned. It is quite useless to rail against obstruction. It is "*vitium adultum et prevalidum*," and its addicts have the excuse that, if they cannot defeat a particular measure, they can prevent others from coming forward. The reply to obstruction is, of course, the guillotine, but the result of the guillotine

is that many provisions are undiscussed and Government amendments are passed in silence. Under this procedure the Government draftsmen show extraordinary ability in making a measure coherent, but even so it often leaves the Commons in a form in which it could not work ; and this brings me to the House of Lords.

I should say that the work of revision in the Upper House was extremely well done, but was done under a sense of sufferance and lack of power which results partly from the composition of the House and partly from the one-sided party legislation of 1911. No great parliamentary body can enjoy the prestige which should be its permanent attribute, if not a fifth of its members normally attend. No such body can develop a full sense of responsibility if its decisions are rendered futile, not by the expressed will of the nation, but by the mere effluxion of time or, in the case of financial Bills, the technique of the measures concerned. Of course the question of reform is far too large to be properly dealt with in parenthesis in an article like this, and here I can only say that I personally should favour a change under which the House should be constituted :

- (1) As to a fraction, by self-selection among the hereditary peers, and as to the rest



(2) By direct election—

(a) of one-third at three fixed intervals,

(b) under proportional representation in large areas, and

(c) by electors of thirty and over ;

and, further, I suggest that the new Upper House should have the same powers as the House of Commons, save for the initiation of taxation and money votes, and should not be overridden except as a result of an election or referendum.

As things now are, the institutions of Great Britain, in so far as the Constitution protects them, are in a more precarious position than those of any other great country. Elsewhere the power of the Legislature is restricted, and fundamental innovations cannot be made without some kind or another of extraordinary and complicated procedure which makes it clear that the country really desires the change. With us a revolution by statute could pass with fewer checks than a Gas Bill, and if a majority of the House of Commons held together for two years any institution could be destroyed without the people having ever been consulted : nay, if the revolution could be clothed in strict financial form, it would take but five weeks to produce chaos. In so desperate a situation the only remedy would be to invoke the dormant veto

of the Crown, a step perhaps involving the existence of the monarchy, which (in Mr. Burke's phrase) would be the last resort of the thinking and the good. All this is perfectly well known. Government after Government has been warned, twenty-one years have passed since the Parliament Act, and yet nothing has been done. Ephemeral problems have been allowed precedence, there has been tepidity and uncertainty of counsel, with a blind attachment to the existing order, and, I fear, in some degree to privilege and place. I have noticed in some a superstitious faith in the ability of the Ship of State to right itself in any storm, while others see nothing but the possible dangers of a new departure, as if there were not the gravest risks in the policy of drift that has so long prevailed. The question was grossly mis-handled by the last Conservative Government (the worst page of a good record), and if the present Government does not solve it they will deserve the worst that can come to them. I will add only that I do not believe that it will be possible to construct a Second Chamber with adequate powers except, in the main, on the elective principle, which, however, should be applied at times different to the elections of the Commons, and also by different methods and to some extent by different electors.

To return to the House of Commons, it is, I submit, a fallacy to expect it either to represent solely the wisdom of the country or to conduct its proceedings on the lines of municipal or commercial business. If it is to fulfil its end, it must represent not only the wisdom but the interests and passions and follies of the people, and all these elements must find expression. The House is often described as a talking shop, and a talking shop it is meant to be, as the very name "Parliament" implies. And in this there is real wisdom as the energies of innovators get dissipated in utterance, and cherished grievances are exposed and destroyed in the free, if often tedious, atmosphere of debate. Over and over again it happens that some alleged hardship or scandal has been sedulously nourished in newspapers, until an apparently formidable case has been made out—only to be blown to pieces by two hours of oral discussion. Save in the case of set party wrangles, I should say that nowhere is the truth quicker or better arrived at than in the House of Commons, partly because of the open scoffing with which false points are received, and partly because of the vast collective knowledge which the members own. Whatever the subject and whoever the orator, he can hardly speak for half an hour without touching on a point on which some other member, perhaps ineffective

on all other subjects, knows more than he does himself and may presently arise to his confusion.

On many points the House of Commons is often unfairly and foolishly attacked ; but there is one sphere in which for decades it has lost its use. There is an old phrase, "Grievance before supply," and this has come to mean in practice that, while grievances are amply ventilated, supply is hardly discussed at all. For twenty or more days in the session enormous sums are submitted to the House, but the discussion that follows does not turn upon the sums themselves, but on some alleged mistakes or defaults of the department that submits them. Then the sums are voted and spent without any real parliamentary check ; indeed, probably in the course of the debate suggestions will have been pressed on the Government which would involve prodigious fresh expense. For many years past the House of Commons has been a grossly extravagant body, and far more prodigal than the contemporary Governments. For every financial concession made to any class, description, or interest there is instant pressure to extend it, without the slightest regard at the moment for the taxation that will certainly be involved. It is true that there is an ancient and salutary rule that no grant can be increased save on a resolution by a Minister of the Crown ; but there are

circumstances (too technical to describe here) in which this rule may be evaded, and in any case the pressure may be so great that a new resolution may have to be introduced. Of course, when the day of taxation comes there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, often by the very men whose act or consent has made the taxation inevitable and whose renewed pressure or supineness may make further burdens equally inevitable next year. The House checks the recklessness of the Executive ! It simply loads them with money and commitments, or has done so up to a year ago.

Now that the country has been really alarmed, great efforts are being made to revive a real parliamentary control over expenditure, though many of the commitments appear almost irrevocable. I imagine proposals will be made to set up an Estimates Committee to examine and report on Estimates before they come before the whole House, but I should say that several committees will be necessary if the expenditure of all the departments is really to be closely scrutinized. Whatever else is done, I would urge that the departments should have greater liberty to vary their own expenditure within the limits of the total sums voted and to use their savings on their own objects. At present the working of the rigid accounting system

perfected by Mr. Gladstone deprives the departments of incentive to economy and of financial responsibility, as they cannot use what they may be able to save, but have simply to hand it back. Years ago I tried to get this changed, and got considerable support within the House ; but Sir Michael Hicks-Beach rose in his wrath and scrunched out the attempt. Nevertheless, all that has happened since convinces me that the present practice entirely defeats its own end, and I am glad to see that this has been recognized in the case of the Post Office by Lord Bridgeman's report. Lastly, and this is of the first importance, I would make it impossible by standing order for members to propose increased expenditure in those cases where it is now allowed.

There is one charge against politics and politicians to which I have already alluded, but which demands some further comment. In its fullest form it is that of financial corruption. In a diluted shape it is that Premiers and Cabinets are somehow controlled by a few plutocrats. One writer, a man of the highest character and deserved distinction in other spheres, states categorically that whoever wielded power in the past, that power has gone in our time to a limited number of wealthy men, and that, although a chief Minister may call himself Premier or

*Président du Conseil* or *Reichskanzler*, he is but the puppet of moneyed interests, whether he resents or acquiesces in his dependence. To my thinking this notion is simply grotesque. I can remember Lord Salisbury well enough to see the kind of broad smile that would have illumined his face at the notion that he was anybody's puppet. I doubt if it would have made him or any of his successors even angry, though I would not say that there have been none of them who have not unduly courted the favour of wealthy individuals. Certainly a Prime Minister's powers are limited, as I have tried to show, but they are limited by visible and known forces ; and suppose that five plutocrats told a leader that he must do something, and fifty of his followers in the Commons told him he must not, it is the fifty who would win each time.

The truth is that politics is not in any way "a dirty game," though it may be played dirtily and by dirty players. It is amazing how educated people apparently pride themselves on the fact that they take no part in the government of their country. There may indeed be good reasons for many to abstain from public life, but that such abstinence can be matter for self-complacency shows how strangely some minds must be composed. Sometimes the excuse is that they would be tarred and corrupted by the

sordidness of the life. Now the life is very tiring and full of uncertainties and disappointments, but it is not sordid in the least. There is, of course, much to condemn, more particularly on the electoral side—simulated indignation, insincere shibboleths, suppression of facts—but in twenty-six years in Parliament I never smelt a whiff of financial corruption. I cannot prove a universal negative, but I have been a whip and a friend of Chief Whips, and for some eight years occupied an office (that of Chairman of Committees) where the evil, if at all prevalent, might be expected to be felt. The chairman has a general supervision over the system of procedure in “private Bills,” and on occasion he can do a good deal to promote, retard, or defeat them. Now these Bills deal with enterprises often of the greatest magnitude in which very large interests are involved, and issues almost vital to the promoters or opponents may be involved in success or failure. All I can say is that in all my time not even the most distant overtures were ever made to me, and when I say that my virtue remained intact, I am bound to add that it was never assailed. In the United States of America the educated and leisured have for the most part abstained from political life, with results to their nation and their several States that were never more obviously disastrous



than now. Hitherto in Great Britain there has been an unfailing supply of active and able young men who have given their best to their country without hope of other reward than an honourable ambition may rightly seek. If the cynics or academic moralists who libel the public life of their nation should prevail in inducing abstention with those whom I may term the graduate classes, then indeed the public life of England might become the mere arena for the struggles of conflicting interests in which the strength of the nation might be dissipated for ever. May the day never come when the old saying, "Noble is the prize and great the hope" (καλὸν γὰρ τὸ ἀθλον καὶ ἡ ἐλπίς μεγάλη), ceases to be as true of English politics as it can ever be of terrestrial effort.

*Nineteenth Century and After* (October 1932).

# SPEECH IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

23rd July 1924

## *On the Third Reading of the Finance Bill*

MR. JAMES HOPE said : When any Budget comes before this House there are two questions, one of which it is usual to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer. One is, "How will he get it ?" and the other is, "What will he do with it ?" Happy is the Chancellor of the Exchequer who has only the latter question to answer—what will he do with the surplus ? I think this House will recognize that both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury are men of great ability, but I cannot say that in this Budget their ability has been very hardly tried. There is nothing easier than to spend a legacy which the wisdom of others has bequeathed ; and there is nothing pleasanter than to distribute lawfully money which you have not earned. However, I do not grudge the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury the satisfaction which they must have felt during the last two or three months. I

know that it must have been very pleasant for them to have realized, that, at the gatherings of the faithful throughout the country, their followers were told to open their mouths and enjoy the extra sweets which a good Chancellor and a kind Financial Secretary to the Treasury had given them. I do not grudge them that satisfaction, but I would ask them what of the immediate future? There is a fog which lies in the future that no question to the Chancellor or to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury has yet dispersed.

In view of the doubtful character of next year's Balance-sheet, some sinister surmises have been cast about as to the intentions of the Chancellor of the Exchequer [Mr. Snowden]. Some think he is prudently discounting the estimates of his advisers, and is really counting on a larger surplus in order to present to the House a more popular Budget next year. Others think he is deliberately working for a deficit in order to justify some new and drastic plan of taxation. I think it is true that most men prefer to be thought more wicked and more clever than they really are—I am sorry the Chancellor of the Exchequer is not here to listen to the kind things I wish to say about him, but I know he is engaged elsewhere—and I have no doubt the right hon. gentleman would be glad if we

were to consider him as a sort of blend of Macchiavel and Robespierre. I, personally, do not regard him in that light, because I have seen in the Chancellor of the Exchequer symptoms of a latent humour which, as a rule, is alien to real malice, and I suspect his design is simply this: he has seen his way, owing to what we have left him, to produce a popular Budget this year and he is letting next year take care of itself. But as long as the answers of the Treasury are so vague as to the probable course of events next year, he need not be surprised if these rumours go forth, and should they continue, I am afraid they are likely to shake that confidence the maintenance of which I am sure the Chancellor has quite sincerely at heart.

A good deal has been said in the course of the Budget discussions as to the proportion between direct and indirect taxation. I do not propose to elaborate that point at length; I am rather disposed to agree with the right hon. gentleman the Member for Paisley [Mr. Asquith] that its importance has been exaggerated, and that for two reasons. The first reason is because it is difficult sometimes to distinguish between the two, and the second is because direct taxation percolates just as much to others, besides those on whom it is first levied, as does indirect taxation. There is a current fallacy that while

indirect taxation percolates to the consumer, direct taxation affects only those who are subject to the immediate assessment. I hardly think that view can be very widely held within this House, and, in a sense, I am almost ashamed of arguing the point, but it is very widely held outside. Many think that when they have put taxation on the rich direct taxpayer they have done something which is good in itself by relieving him of some of his superfluous wealth and that they have hurt nobody else. Nothing could be more fallacious. Direct taxation must and does pass on, so long as men do not hoard their wealth. If they spend it, those who are the subjects of direct taxation reduce their expenditure and that reduced expenditure is passed on to some producer, somehow.

Let me give an example of how this works. I do not know whether hon. members realize what the position was immediately after the War, and to illustrate it I will take the instance of a man with a large nominal income, which we will call £20,000 a year. That man before the War had something over £18,000 a year to spend. During the last years of the War and in the two years immediately afterwards he had not £18,000 but £10,000 to spend, and that £10,000 had only the same purchasing power as £4,000 had before the War. So that

this man, who was accounted rich, suddenly found his purchasing power reduced to less than a quarter of what it had been before. The result was that somebody besides himself suffered. He was inconvenienced, but others suffered. It may have been his charities which suffered ; it may have been that he reduced his outside staff or the number of his indoor servants ; it may have been that he ceased to buy the car which he was accustomed to buy before, but in each of these cases, while he may have been inconvenienced, somebody else suffered. Can hon. members who think about it dispassionately deny that the high taxation which is at present prevailing is responsible, at any rate in some degree, for the unemployment from which we now suffer so seriously ?

There is another class of rich men. I need not say I am very far from that class myself—I wish I belonged to it—but I know for instance a man with a very large nominal income, an income of well over £50,000. That man was accustomed to put a very considerable sum, £10,000 or £15,000, into new speculative enterprises. If he lost he shrugged his shoulders ; if in the end the money fructified, naturally, he was pleased, but in any case employment was created. That man—and there were many like him—is able to do so no longer, and therefore I would beg

of hon. members to realize that even the idlest and most selfish rich do involuntarily give employment and if they are hit by direct taxation, as I say they may be inconvenienced, but it often means taking away the livelihood of others. I say, "Tax, if you will, those superfluities which give profit outside this country." Probably it is impracticable, but I should like to see an absentee or passport tax, to catch some of the wealth which goes annually to the Riviera and Egypt. Probably it would not work ; I can see great difficulties in the way, but I should be glad to see such a plan carried out if it were possible. If it be not possible, then I say, "Tax those luxuries and superfluities which come in from abroad."

I know the argument that it matters not whether money is spent within a country or not. Economists argue that it all comes back in some form or another against exports or services. It may come back, but when it comes back, how it comes back and who benefits by it if it does come back, nobody can say. If a man loses £1,000 at a gaming table abroad, that £1,000 presumably goes to the management of that gaming table. They do something with it, and in the end some debt due to England may be paid with it, but, whatever economists may say, I am quite certain no man of common sense

would say it is the same thing to lose £1,000 at Monte Carlo as to spend £1,000 in Coventry or in Glasgow. What is certain is that the money does not fructify in this country in the meantime. Therefore I would say, "Tax luxury imports." I think the sparkling wines tax is a very good case in point. That is a perfectly just tax, and if money is to be raised I prefer that Epernay and Coblenz should feel the burden of the tax rather than Burton or Glenlivet. I would go further; I would say that there should be a tax upon such things as imported lace and silks, because if money is to be raised it is better the effect of the tax should be felt at Lyons than at Nottingham. I would say the same as to ladies' ready-made clothes. I am no authority on this subject, but I would rather, if such a tax were put on, that the Rue de la Paix suffered than Bond Street. So would I go through the whole list of luxury taxes. I think they are defensible on revenue grounds and on sumptuary grounds, and, if they have incidentally a protective effect, I do not think that they are in any way the worse for that. I would, therefore, by this indirect taxation, rather than by direct taxation, as far as opportunity and practicability allow, make the luxuries of the rich subserve the employment of the poor of this country. What does this Bill do for



unemployment? As far as the remission of the Tea Duty is concerned, nothing in this country. The remission of the Sugar Duty, I suppose, does something with regard to confectionery, and, perhaps, some manufactured mineral waters. The remission of the Corporation Profits Tax may, perhaps, do a little.

But there are two serious matters in which the working of this Finance Bill will be dead against employment. First of all, it imperils our Dominion markets. I do not know whether hon. members realize how important they are in the present condition of the world. This is the kind of thing that I hear in my own constituency: "Trade is bad. Some of our old customers cannot buy, because their money is so depreciated that it is impossible for them to pay in English sterling. Others will not buy. There are tariffs in America against us. But we have always hitherto been able to depend upon our Dominions and especially on the Australian preference. That has saved us up till now, and that we look to in the future whatever the condition of Europe may be." But are we to take always and give nothing? Can we rely on these markets if we make no overtures to our own people beyond the seas? I cannot conceive a more calamitous thing for the trade and the revenue of this country than that any of our

Dominions should be tempted to enter into fiscal agreements with other parts of the world, and yet, if we persistently slam the door and refuse to give them anything in return for what they give us, sooner or later, in spite of all patriotic sentiment, that must be the natural effect of what we are now doing.

Then with regard to the New Import Duties. It is very difficult to understand the mentality of those who have so lightly struck them off. It is not as if we get anything in return. When Cobden negotiated his treaty of 1860, it is true that he dealt a deadly blow to the silk industry, but, looked at from a purely materialistic point of view of the whole of the trade of the country, undoubtedly for several years afterwards he did obtain a valuable entrance into French markets as a consequence. But here you are sacrificing revenue and industry without gaining anything whatever. In the same way, it has sometimes been held that the result of protective duties was to force up prices and admit of the creation of rings. Nothing of the kind can be alleged here. Competition has gone on freely, production has increased and prices diminished, and a valuable industry has not only been saved, but benefited through the worst of times. Yet, for no business reason, the whole tax and all the profit which it brought to the industry are swept

away simply for the sake of theory and nothing else.

I can only explain it on this theory. It has not been done as a matter of business, but in consequence of what I can only describe as a perverted religious dogma. The time was when, in this country, and you may say throughout the world, religious uniformity was enforced by the most terrible sanctions, and in the sixteenth century in this country all who did not conform were liable either to combustion or vivisection according to the Government that was in power. If a heresy appeared harmless in its fruits, that was no reason whatever why it should be spared because the more harmless it appeared, the greater mischief might be thought to be latent within it. Those times have changed, but the spirit has not changed, and it found new embodiments in the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century many men got somewhat indefinite about their religious dogma, but, as dogma is a necessity to most men, they embraced the new creed of economic dogma instead. Personally, my religion supplies me with dogma enough not to have to run to economists for more. But that was not so with many men in the nineteenth century, and is not so now, and they embrace the new faith with keenness and fanaticism. All the characteristics of their pre-

decessors in the religious field have been repeated and are repeated now, and I think I can see such characters as Torquemada, Topcliffe, and Praise-God Barebones, all rolled up together under the genial personality of the right hon. gentleman the Member for Paisley [Mr. Asquith] or the more austere embodiment of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. They rival, and, although their methods are not quite the same, they, if anything, exceed the enthusiasm and fanaticism of the past. No inquisitor, no zealot of the Synod of Dort, no supra-lapsarian Cameronian Minister has shown more fury in defence of orthodoxy, and, with regard to these particular taxes, they used a ruthless syllogism. "The Import Duties are heterodox ; heterodoxy has to be put down ; therefore these taxes must be put down." And considerations of trade, considerations of revenue, and considerations of the men they displaced are nothing, because this dogma bears them down.

Nay, I will go further, I think they act in the spirit of a privileged theocracy. Hon. members may have heard of one test of religious orthodoxy being

*"quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus."*

That cannot apply to the dogma of free imports. It is not held everywhere ; it is not held by all ;

it was not always held. According to its votaries, Britain is a land of promise, Britain alone has the true faith. All the outer world lies in the shadow of darkness, unless they admit Holland with its 5 per cent. tariff as a kind of Samaria. But, for the rest, we and we alone are the fortunate people. We and we alone are the Chosen Land. Manchester is the Holy City, and Deansgate is a *Via Sacra*, and I suppose the Temple is to be found in St. Anne's Square. They copy ancient precedents in all but one thing, and that is this: Whereas the worship of the God of Israel did not demand human sacrifice, the worship of the god of Cobden does. Now I would ask the Government how long they are going to adhere to this theory? They are not bound to it by their own principles; they are not bound to it by the practice of their Labour friends overseas. There is nothing in Collectivism that lends itself to free imports, and if we can imagine that the means of production in whole or in part were taken into the hands of the State, I am certain that the Government would have to see that the produce of the State had the same reasonable protection that we demand for it now. They are not justified by the practice, as I see it, of any of their Labour friends abroad. Is the Labour Party in Australia in favour of free

imports? Is the Labour Party in any country abroad in favour of free imports? Here and here alone hon. members who call themselves Socialists are traditionalists, and bound by an antiquated tradition of the worst kind.

This dogma of free imports was allied to other dogmas—the dogma of free trade in labour, the dogma of *laissez-faire* all round. Those dogmas have gone, and no party now denies that the interference of the State, wisely conducted to specific objects, may be justified, even if it interferes with the unlimited liberty of the subject. Nobody now clings to the old theories that were rampant about the year 1835, and of which, perhaps, this is the sole survivor. This theory of free imports was born of Benthamism out of Whiggery, like the Poor Law. Hon. members who profess modern Collectivist theories must realize the origin of that to which they still adhere. Not only are the theories of those times gone, but the illusions of those times have gone too. At the time when these principles were at their heyday, at the time of the Exhibition of 1850, men cherished the generous illusion that Free Trade would produce universal brotherhood and universal peace. They held, what seems to us now the strange view, that scientific progress meant moral improvement. What do we see now? Poison gas, tanks,

machine-guns, and bombing aeroplanes—these are the fruits of science, and no man can look on the twentieth century and think that any of those things on which our grandfathers built their theories have a place in the world as we see it now.

Hon. members have dropped the other parts of these theories. How long will they remain wedded to this? Goods come into the country and take the living from our people's mouths, and they do not intervene. Those goods may be the result of long hours of labour, and still they do not intervene. Those goods may be the result of sweated labour, and still they do not intervene. If they did intervene, I personally would go far with them on some items of their programme; and such intervention on their part would be not only not against their principles, but would be in accordance with the logical sequence of the principles which they profess. I am inclined to think that I see some stirrings of conscience on their part, but I do not know how far conscience will prevail over tradition and party uniformity. But be that as it may, I am quite certain that the problem of our day, the problem of unemployment, is to be solved on these lines and on no other, and, if hon. members cannot repudiate their present theories, the country will repudiate them.

## THE THREATENED WRACK

THERE have been various phases in modern English history in which, in the view of competent observers, the body politic was moving on a downward slope from which recovery seemed hardly possible. To mention two instances that occur to me, the diaries of Charles Greville, Clerk of the Privy Council, and the correspondence of Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, supply passages of extreme pessimism during the years 1830-48. Always, however, by the trend of events rather, it may be, than by the plans of statesmen, the emergency passed and no deep-seated injury was left. On the other hand, the cataclysm of 1914 and the financial crisis of 1931 came with a suddenness which astonished all but a few among our people.<sup>1</sup> The character of a political prophet is one that is dangerous, and that of a prophet of evil peculiarly ungrateful. If he is wrong, he excites derision and loses

<sup>1</sup> This was no fault of the *National Review*, whose editor, Mr. L. J. Maxse, continually and in both instances, warned his countrymen of the dangers that threatened them.



credit, however justified may have been his fears. If he is right, there is little consolation to a patriotic man in the inevitable but futile rebuke "I told you so." Nevertheless, with all this before me, I feel bound to say that never have I known the internal political situation so menacing as now, and I was a candidate in every election from 1892 (*æt.* 21) to 1929, inclusive.

The main cause of the danger to the State is, of course, the growth of the Socialist Party, but the special reason which makes the danger so acute is the disappearance of the Liberal Party as possible reversionaries of power. I have often been amazed at the satisfaction with which some of my Conservative friends comment on the Liberal decline and fall. Not that I love the Liberal Party, or ever have. I think their main characteristics in the days of their power were an invincible self-sufficiency and intellectual arrogance ; but what boots it now to gloat over the abasement of those who continue to mumble the futilities of 1850 in a new and furiously reacting world :

Bitterly, however, as we Conservatives disliked and distrusted the Liberal Government of pre-war years, we never supposed that they would shake the fundamental bases of society, of personal liberty, of essential credit. I do not

think any of them ever really wished to, and if they had, their propertied supporters were too many. Our charge against them was, and is, that they let loose subversive forces they could not control, and gave those forces a constitutional opportunity which they did nothing to regulate or limit. I am not one of the enemies of Mr. Lloyd George. I saw him at close quarters during some of the worst days of the war and was deeply impressed by his buoyancy and courage. But in the *damnosa facunditas* of his Celtic exuberance he stirred up passions of greed and envy whose attack has gone far beyond the limited objective of the landed and brewing interests, against which he led it. Further, the Liberals had an undoubted grievance against the House of Lords, inasmuch as it acted efficiently as a revising Chamber only when the Conservatives were not in power. This grievance they could have set themselves to remedy by changing the constitution of the House ; but instead they took the line of least resistance and greatest party advantage by concentrating the power of legislation in the one Chamber which they then controlled. Doubtless their self-complacent leaders and plutocrats never conceived it possible that any party but the Tories could compete with them for power, and it was essential for the march of

“ progress ” that the wings of the Tories should be clipped. That a revolutionary party should seize the powers of the Constitution was derided as the boggy of reactionary partisans.

Ever since 1911 we have lived under Single Chamber government, subject in most cases to a two-year's moratorium ; but the inherent danger of the system has been obscured by the war, by minority governments, by coalitions, by Conservative reactions. Only now is the gravity of the threat apparent, and even now it is strangely misapprehended owing to one fundamental feature of our institutions being persistently ignored.

This feature is the omnipotence of Parliament. I have not studied all the post-war constitutions of Europe, but I could not name any great country where the powers of Parliament (if a Parliament still exists) are not subject to some limits. There are always certain things that the Legislature cannot do without some very special process, such as a referendum to the electors or—in a federation—approval of the constituent units. Such a feature is very marked in the American Constitution, and it was under this process that Prohibition was first passed and then repealed. But in our country Parliament can effect a revolution by the same process and with less inquiry than in the case of a Gas or Water

Bill that is opposed, and this power can now be exercised by a bare majority of one House.

There is absolutely nothing under constitutional practice which a Socialist Government could not do if they held together for two years, and if they were able to clothe a measure in a tight-fitting financial garb they could pass it without any delay at all. Moreover, after the two years there need be no further waiting over anything. By then the Second Chamber will have gone and all the revolutionary arrears of destruction can be put through and cleared off at once. Moreover, the one sole exception which now exists to the universal power of the House of Commons—I mean its incapacity to prolong its own existence—would then lapse and the House of Commons could pass a Decennial or Quindecennial Act and go on happily as did the Rump, till some enterprising general removed the Mace.

At this point I must make a reservation. I have given examples—extreme, it may be—of what is now possible and could not be checked “under constitutional practice.” Nevertheless, it could be checked under constitutional theory, and this theory might be put into practice, but not without further peril of the gravest. The organs of authority under the Constitution are three—the King, Lords, and Commons—and

constitutional experience evolved in the past the nicest balance of their functions and relations. Is it conceivable that when one of these organs has gone, the position of the other two can be unchanged? After all, the Crown has formidable powers. The King can dismiss Ministers, can veto Bills, can dissolve Parliament on his own initiative. Is it not certain that appeals would be made to him to save the country from a casual majority of the one House? But then, the Crown would be brought at once into the very vortex of civil strife, and the Sovereign be placed in the intolerable dilemma of either permitting irretrievable evil or risking the very existence of the great institution which he embodies.<sup>1</sup> In such a situation it is easy to imagine the nature and strength of the extra-constitutional forces and organizations that would be evoked.

Of course, I shall be told, "Your fears are fantastic. This is not the way things happen in England. All you say may be theoretically possible" (demonstrably, it is), "but, after all, there are men of experience and moderation in the Labour Party and they will take care that changes do not go too far."

I answer first, consider their programme and

<sup>1</sup> In this connection see Mr. Ian Colvin's *Life of Lord Carson*, Chapter XXVIII.

reflect that, though in office, they have never yet been in power. I say, secondly, that these assumed moderate leaders will not be their own masters. The crisis of 1931 showed that a Socialist Government cannot live without the approval of the Trade Union Council, and it is clear that the members of that body have learnt nothing from their then experience. And I say, thirdly, that nothing in English history since, let us say, 1688, gives us any assurance as to what may happen in a wholly new period of violent revolt against constitutional checks and against any delay in the unscrupulous attainment of coveted power.

Whoever prophesied, who could have prophesied, the suppression of popular government in half Europe? The wise men of last century (with rare exceptions like Carlyle) wrote as if the spread of democracy was equally desirable and certain. Mr. Grote, the historian of Greece, could describe the successive ages of the "tyrants," the oligarchs, and the democrats, and could complacently point the moral for his own time; and, in spite of a case like Prussia, the analogy for a long time seemed to hold. Indeed, as late as 1917, the collapse of the Russian autocracy under stress of disaster seemed a natural enough phenomenon; but that country after country should willingly return to the age of the tyrants

in a half-wrecked Europe was beyond the imagination of man.

The establishment of arbitrary government by a transient faction—or, perhaps, later by an individual—in Great Britain is not more improbable than would have seemed in 1919 the things that have actually happened in Europe since. Experience is simply ousted by the sight of the accomplished facts. None the less, if examples be of any value, England did exhibit in the seventeenth century a process of Parliamentary abuse culminating in military rule, and, whatever the revolutions of science, human nature remains the same. I will not, however, lean on history, but having tried to set out the legal possibilities, I will now come to the concrete prospects.

The National Government, since the crisis of 1931, has undoubtedly done great things which they are fully entitled to blazon; but the combination of forces and circumstances against them will be none the less extremely formidable at the next election. They will suffer as in 1929 from the selfish discontent of the idle or unthinking, who expect them to restore pre-war conditions. They will have against them the numerous electors whose dominant idea of political equity is to give each side alternately a chance. They will lose by the erosive drip of

the newspapers which decry and deride every Government in turn. They will be deprived of the impetus which a single united party can impart, but which a coalition infallibly loses when the crisis which gave rise to it is over. The Fascist movement will detach many from their side. They will bear the burden of the mistakes, real or alleged, with which all Governments are debited, and they will face that imputation of militarism which is so sedulously and maliciously disseminated. They are only too likely to be gravely weakened by acute differences on the government of India, which must be fought out in the light of conviction, but which, however illogically, will remain a cause of division even though the issue has been settled for the time. They will have enemies in that class of writers who confound innovation with progress, and they will feel the inertia and sneers of those who deem themselves superior to political life. This last point must be amplified a little.

For at least a generation, and notably since the war, there has been a steady decline of political consciousness and interest among the educated classes in Great Britain. In ancient Greece abstainers from politics were called "Idiots" or privateers—and reproached accordingly. Now men and women seem to think their own



abstinence a mark of superiority and virtue. The wits of the day—especially young prigs—use “politician” as a term of reproach, and the same is true of many men of business and, perhaps, of most Service officers, so far as they think of the subject at all. In academic circles there is almost a cult of Idiocy, fostered largely by libellous figments as to financial corruption in public life.<sup>1</sup> It might be thought that the government of one’s country is worth the attention even of the cultured, or that the greater the evils of political life the more it behoves the virtuous to enter it; but such is not the view of our Illuminates, in spite of the example of what has befallen America from generations of educated “Idiots.” It may be added that there are also some wits who do join the party of innovation in the generous belief that they are “progressing,” though their progress may be that of a train on the Inner Circle or that, again, of the swine of Gadara. They feel happy that they are going somewhere.

This whole conjunction of discontent and inertia which will weigh heavily against the present Government will have no counterpart among their opponents. Like the Balkan Allies

<sup>1</sup> Libellous but not actionable, as the charges are too general. If the aspersions on the class were applied to individuals some of us would be richer men.

in 1912, they may turn against each other afterwards, but they will stand together in the hope of victory first, inspired alike by the stimulants of revenge and zeal. I have always thought it the greatest of mistakes to suppose that appeals to interest prevail in politics : it is the call to emotions and passions, good or bad, that will win a fight. The Government may point to an admirable record and set out a reasoned programme of steady improvement (something better, it may be hoped, than "Safety First"), but against that will be the evocation of the potent spirits of envy, malice, destruction and also of that honest enthusiasm which believes that legislation can change human nature and defy economic law. Add to all this the possibility of some unforeseen incident like the revelation of the "Zinovieff letter," and who will say that the high-water mark of 1929 may not be surpassed by fifty seats ? For the chances of Revolution it would be enough.

No reasonable man would grudge the Socialists a recurring share of the pomps of office, or would have a right to complain if they passed much of which he did not approve. But it is now the very fundamentals of national prosperity and the rooted institutions of ages that are imperilled. I remember in 1924 mentioning to Lord Balfour my fears of the results if

the Liberals who held the balance of power were to tolerate the Socialist Government for long. "Yes," he said, "they may ruin our credit, and if our credit goes, we starve." What he foresaw in 1924 nearly came to pass in 1931, and little imagination is needed to conceive the possibilities of the years after 1935 if, unchecked either by organic laws or a Second Chamber, they get all power, legislative and executive, into their own grasp. Good men, I know, there are among them, fair-minded in individual dealings, but they will never be able to resist the force of the machine behind them—and they suffer almost all from the fatal delusion that national wealth is an inexhaustible pool from which they may take a flow of plenty, in any bulk and at any pace, through any channel to any destination without drying up the source.

Of course, I am not so foolish as to prophesy that all these calamitous consequences of the Parliament Act will necessarily come to pass after the next election. The discontented and the inert *may* take fright in time. The work of the Government *may* be appreciated. The Socialist Party *may* have a serious split, though this is very unlikely. The residue of the Liberals *may* be strong enough to hold a balance. The anti-militarist agitation—the most unscrupulous since the time of Chinese Labour—*may* have run

its course and have been exposed. Some new major issue *may* arise and sweep aside all other quarrels. In short, in one way or another, we *may* be saved from ourselves by Providence or chance. But, on the other hand, we may not. The risk is there. It could hardly be graver. Before long it will be imminent, and it is a marvel to me how patriotic statesmen should be willing with seeming complacency to take it.

Happily there is still time. The Government, indeed, are accumulating their commitments and will say that nothing more can be fitted in ; but to fill up your engagement book in advance is an easy means for the evasion of a distasteful task, and in practice some entries can always be cancelled. Moreover, no complicated legislation is needed at the moment. It is true that no permanent settlement of the issue involved is possible until a new Second Chamber is created, representing the constant as against the ephemeral temper of the country, and able to defend the national tradition from assault, whether from right or left. The immediate task, however, is to save the country from the risk of despotic government by a faction in 1936, and this requires not so much time as decision and resolution. I have no wish to see the break-up of the present Administration, but if they cannot agree upon their duty, the confidence

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even of their best friends will hardly long survive.

*National Review* (March 1935).

P.S.—The danger was surmounted in 1935, but it still remains and possibly recent events may make it more acute. (*June* 1939.)

## SPEECH IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

*26th November 1936*

I SHOULD like to take up the question which was implied by the repeated descriptions by the noble Lord, Lord Snell, of one of the combatant parties in Spain as "rebels." We all, I think, recognize that insurrection is wrong in principle, but are there never to be any exceptions? If there are never to be any exceptions, why that is very good news for Herr Hitler, who has been confirmed in his position by an enormous majority of the plebiscite of the German people. And now, if that view is to be taken, he may be quite reassured as to any action of the British Labour Party, and will know that they will help him to get supplies of arms if he has any sort of trouble with any section of his own people. But on the other hand, are there never to be any exceptions? In the seventeenth century there was a high political and theological school that said there should be none. That, I thought, had been completely repudiated since, and I should have

thought that at any rate the great body of English public opinion would have supported the rebellion in retrospect against both Charles I. and James II.

But is it now to be said that a majority is to have the benefit of a doctrine of passive obedience which a monarch could not have? That would be a strange doctrine indeed, and I wonder if there is any noble Lord opposite who will confirm it; but if not, and if there are to be exceptions, I cannot conceive any better cause for rising against a *de facto* Government than when you see it forcing your country into the bottomless Russian pit. The elections in Spain gave the Government a small majority in seats though not in votes, but there is the most abundant evidence that that Government never governed. I could quote one eye-witness after another—Professor Peers, a man of the most rigid neutrality, Mr. Loveday, formerly Chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce in Barcelona, Mr. Caplan, in his letters to the *Times* newspaper, and the Spanish Liberal who was given full print by that paper, and who wrote under the name of “Castilian.” It was perfectly proved that no public order was kept. One hundred and seventy churches and many clubs and rallying places for political opponents were burned. Passes to travel about the country

were not signed by Government officials, but by the secretaries or agents of revolutionary clubs. That went on for months, and it culminated in the murder of a political leader by uniformed police, or at any rate, regular police in a prison van. If I could conceive myself as Commissioner of Police of this Metropolis, I assure your Lordships in all earnestness and sincerity I should never dream of disposing of the noble Lord, Lord Strabolgi, in any such fashion ; but that is what this eminent Government did.

I wish to turn from that to another, a kindred subject. Some people put the blame for the insurrection upon the Church. No doubt the leaders of the Church in Spain do take the side of the Nationalist forces. It is very natural if a conflict breaks out in your country that you should wish for the success of the people who will not cut your throat rather than of those who will, but there is no evidence whatever that the action of the Generals was instigated by that of the leaders of the Church, though I should blame them very little under the circumstances if it had been. It is quite false to suppose that the insurgent forces are all animated by a burning spirit of Catholicism. They are not. They are composed, as my noble friend below me said, of all kinds of elements. They are



not all Catholics ; they are not all Monarchists ; they are not all Fascists. I am told that one or two of the leading Generals actually belong to the Grand Orient Order which is incompatible with Catholicism. What they are united in is to save their country from the fate that has befallen Russia, and that is all.

I know there is some difficulty in arguing about Spain, and where any interest of the Church in Spain is concerned, and that for several reasons. In the first place the same religion may be presented very differently in different countries according to the race and mentality prevailing in the country, and no doubt Englishmen will find a more congenial presentment of the same religion in, let us say, the Rhineland or Central Switzerland, or Oberammergau than in Spain. Then there is the tradition of Philip the Second, the Armada, Westward Ho, and all that which comes to people's minds when they are not conscious of it. There is a third point, and that is that it is very difficult to convey to ordinary English people, what is an undoubted fact to those who have studied it, that just as in Russia so in the Latin countries, there are many large sections who have a real burning hatred of Christianity and which would make very short work of any other form of Christianity if it stood up against them.

All these causes make it difficult with regard to Spain, above all other countries, to put a case before an English audience, and that accounts, I suppose, for the extraordinary illusion which prevails that the Church in Spain retained its power and privileges up to the Republican rising of 1931. The truth is that the Church has not been a dominant factor in Spanish politics for at least one hundred years. The whole of the Church property was confiscated in 1836, and after much controversy and trouble a Concordat was established in 1852. Under that Concordat, in place of the confiscated lands, allowances were doled out by the Government. Now the Primate under that settlement got something over £1,800 a year, but the parish priest got £22 and no more. I quote that on the authority of a Liberal writer, Mr. Butler Clark I think the name was, who wrote in a Cambridge series. I have every sympathy with the incumbents of the Church of England who have suffered under the Tithe Act. I think the poorer ones have had in some cases hard measure, but to have expected one of them, even if unmarried, to live on this pittance would have aroused a storm of indignation.

Then with regard to education, why put the blame in Spain for the lack of education on the Church alone? What was the State doing all

these years ? If the State could pass a measure of disendowment, why could it not have passed a measure for education ? The Church would not have had the power to oppose them. As a matter of fact, such education as there was was done by the Church. On the authority of the correspondent of the *Times*, whose message had not been censored, there were 90,000 children of school age in Madrid ; 50,000 were educated in Church schools and 40,000 had no schools to go to. The Government of Madrid came in and shut up those schools for 50,000 children, so then there were 90,000 without education. What I suppose can be alleged is that the Church could not cover the whole ground, and no doubt they would have opposed proposals for purely secular education. Just those two points are the very things that have been alleged, and with like injustice, in the past against the Church of England.

Now I have to say one or two things which I very much regret about the utterances of certain most reverend and right reverend Prelates on this whole question. I am not referring to the most reverend Primate. He has said what I should have expected him to say, and I deeply regret that through a misconception he has been unjustly attacked by the *Osservatore Romano*. I am afraid I cannot say the like of his brother,

the most reverend Prelate the Archbishop of York. He, speaking at a diocesan meeting, dwelt at length on the situation in Spain in a tone of cold detachment ; and it is deplorable that throughout there was not one word of Christian sympathy for the thousands of priests and religious women who have lost their lives often under most atrocious conditions, for no other reason than their witness to that Christianity the fundamentals of which are professed both in Toledo and York. Having said so much I feel bound just to add that I received this morning a letter from the most reverend Prelate, very courteously expressed, in which he regretted that he was unable to be here to-night. He said in that letter that he had *prima facie* evidence that at least three Spanish Protestant pastors with their families had been murdered by members or adherents of the Nationalist forces in Spain. I trust that he has been misinformed. I should have thought that he would not have gone anywhere else, but have tried to get this *prima facie* charge sent to the proper quarter ; but if there be any kind of truth in it, it deserves of course exactly the same condemnation as would be the case on the other side. It seems most difficult to believe, because Protestantism is just as incompatible with Bolshevism as Catholicism ; but if through some strange mis-

guided fury in the Nationalist forces they did commit such acts they could not have done a worse disservice to their country or their faith.

LORD STRABOLGI. Probably the Moors did it.

LORD RANKEILLOUR. Well, the matter must be looked into, of course. I am speaking generally. In so far as the Nationalist forces have committed outrages—if they had and in so far as they have—equal reprobation should fall upon them, because neither in this nor in anything else does the end justify the means. But I have seen no evidence either in degree or extent comparable to what has been done on the other side. I am not going to stand here and harrow your Lordships with particular stories, though I could. I will point to two matters only. The first is the broadcast—I suppose the official broadcast, anyhow the broadcast from the people in actual power at Barcelona—which called for the extermination of all Catholics and Fascists by name. The other is the statement in the uncensored correspondence to the *Times* that a few weeks ago it was enough in Madrid to be either in Holy Orders or to bear the name of nobleman to ensure your nocturnal murder by the secret committees. There is nothing whatever on the other side at all comparable to that.

I will not say anything about the issue of the

conflict or ultimate aims. In the extreme difficulties of the international situation I recognize that our Government must maintain strict neutrality. I would only utter a word of warning, if I may venture to do so, lest in this as in other matters their very natural wish to co-operate with France should not drive them further than they will. As for the Nationalist forces and what they may do if they succeed—well, I love the form of government neither in Italy nor in Germany, and I trust that a reasonable Constitution may in the end emerge. But for the moment, in this struggle as regards the issue between them and their enemies, I say that they are fighting the battle of righteousness at least as much as the northern forces in America whom our grandfathers applauded.

SPEECH IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

*9th March 1939*

LORD RANKEILLOUR. My Lords, I do not propose to follow the noble Viscount [Lord Cecil] in the matter of refugees further than to say that I entirely repudiate the notion that we have any special responsibility, or indeed beyond humanitarian grounds any responsibility for the refugees from Spain ; and in any case the unhappy Jews, whether they be Jewish by race or by religion, ought to have priority over them. I am not going to speak about the question of the recognition of General Franco. I propose to go further, and to defend General Franco himself in his actions and policy from first to last. I am perfectly free to confess that I feel with some bitterness on this question on account of the outrages to religion which have occurred in Spain, but that is not the fundamental ground on which I base my case. I base my case on this, that the Government against which General Franco rose had forfeited all moral authority. I do not suppose that any one in this House

would argue that a legal Government ought never to be resisted. I am sure all Liberals would approve of the two successful risings against our own Governments in the seventeenth century. I imagine they would also approve of the rising of the American Colonies against us—at least, the whole Apostolic succession of Whiggery down to Dr. Murray and Professor Trevelyan would so approve.

I take it a little later than that. In the year 1860 there was a very strong, and I think a predominant, legal opinion in America that any State in the Union had the right to secede if it chose. There was good legal ground for that, because actually when they began their first changes of the Constitution in the last decade of the eighteenth century several States did formally secede in order that the reconstruction might be easier. Anyhow, there was so strong a legal opinion that it deterred President Buchanan from any strong action. Well, what was to happen in that case? I suppose you could have got a decision from the Supreme Court in two or three years, but in the words of that eminent Liberal, Lord Bryce, "The swords of the soldiers cut the knots of the lawyers," and Lincoln was determined to take action, whether legal or not, because he could not see States of his own Union seceding in order that



they might continue their social and economic system on the immoral basis of slavery.

Now I would come to something later still. In this case I do not appeal for a moment to noble Lords opposite, because they would not admit my premises, but it is an argument valid for any Conservative who may still be in doubt. In the years 1912 to 1914 the whole Conservative Party considered that it was a grave constitutional outrage to force on the people of Ulster, without an Election, without the consent of the whole people of the United Kingdom, a Government against their will. This was not from any special love of the Ulstermen. It is true that some supported them on religious grounds, but among a great many Conservatives there was no particular liking for the Ulstermen. They did not want to be too closely associated with them. In my own case, of course, it just happened—though it was quite an irrelevancy—that I was in actual theological agreement with their opponents, and so in fact was the Chief Whip of the Conservative Party. But the point was not whether Ulstermen were a likeable or a tolerant set of people. The whole point was whether they ought to have a Government forced upon them without moral authority against their will. The whole Conservative Party without

exception—I think absolutely without exception—were ready to back them in their resistance. If you take it as a question of pure legality, apart from merits, we were abetting an illegal conspiracy, though, of course, the Government dared not prosecute. If the late Lord Birkenhead was in it up to the neck, my noble friend Viscount Cecil was at least in it up to the diaphragm, and so were all of us.

If Sir Edward Carson had a good case, General Franco had a very much better case. Sir Edward Carson feared oppression as the result of what was thought to be the unwarranted act of the Imperial Government. In the case of General Franco it was not his fear of oppression; it was his knowledge of what was going on. Long before General Franco's rising there had been a series of events which showed that the then Government had lost all control and were letting it slip to others through their hands. There was arson in many cases, not only of churches but of political clubs, assumption of authority by illegal bodies, systematic tampering with and weakening of the army. And all this in peace time. Finally, when it came to the murder of the leader of the Opposition by policemen in a Black Maria, it really was time for somebody to do something. In a situation such as that, what are good citizens to do? Are they merely

to sit quiet, allow outrage to go on, see their country going on towards the abyss and wait on the chance that on some future occasion they may still be alive and able to put a vote in the ballot box, or are they to strike to the best of their power? I am thinking of the line of Mr. Browning :

“ While God’s champion lives, wrong shall be resisted.”

Because they were soldiers, were they not on that account to do what they could to save their country? They were the very people who could do it, and if they could do it they ought.

Of course, now we know very well that the Communist rising was preparing all the time. The Anglican Bishop of Liverpool is a witness of the fact that in the Canaries there was a whole list—and in many other places too—of people who were on the black list to be shot as soon as the Communists came into power. That list included not only clergy but professional men, and most of the doctors on the island. That stigma of outrage has gone on from first to last. If noble Lords have read carefully the occasionally contributed articles in the *Times*—the *Times* itself took a somewhat frigid, detached attitude—you will remember

that those correspondents gave wonderful accounts of continued outrage right down to the late murder of hostages on the French frontier. This cannot be denied. This is the dilemma the Republican Government have been in : if they ordered or deliberately allowed these outrages, they were fiends ; if they were unable to stop them, they were unfit to govern. I do not know which horn of the dilemma critics of Genreal Franco would take.

It is no part of my case that the progress of the National army was wholly unblemished ; it would, of course, be foolish to suppose it could be in a civil war. The stories of massacre at Badajos and Guernica have been disproved. But, no doubt, there was many a hasty drum-head court martial and swift execution to follow. But what I do say is that there was nothing in the least comparable to the indictment that could be set up on the other side at any time during the war. And also at the beginning, do you suppose that the advancing armies were or could be in a judicial frame of mind ? When they marched up through part of Andalusia and Estremadura, on every hand they had reports of the most appalling outrages. For example, could they be very cool in their minds when they heard that a number of honest women had been ordered by a Communist

court to undergo the most unspeakable outrages: It is not in human nature that they could.

The cause of the Nationalists has been prejudiced, and was particularly prejudiced early, by various factors. For example, it was a military revolt, and ever since Cromwell's time that has not been liked in England. Then there were the Moors. Their number, of course, has been greatly exaggerated, and Moors were equally employed by the Republican Government to quell the insurrection by General Sanjurjo. Then there was the Church: that again excited prejudice in some circles in England, partly owing to the extraordinary fallacy that the Church still enjoys its ancient privileges. As a matter of fact, I think it will be found that the Church, first and last, had very little to do with the struggle except to suffer. Then, of course, after the events of last autumn the cause of the Nationalists, with many others, was prejudiced by the mass hysteria and perverted thinking which arose after the settlement of Munich.

In this connection and in many others we have seen very strange phenomena. I might almost say, in the words of Mr. Burke, "I live in an inverted order." That charming hymn to St. Jingo which was the solace of my childhood is now sung on Socialist lips, except that

they sing, "We do want to fight" and not, "We don't." Then, again, the Foreign Secretary said the other day that no statesman in this country would be in favour of a preventive war. If he puts the emphasis on the word "statesman," no doubt he is right; but, judging by the speeches which have been made, I can hardly doubt that many who think themselves statesmen are distinctly in favour of it, and were in favour of a preventive war by intervention in Spain. Then there are some remarkable phenomena connected with the clergy. It has sometimes been alleged—I do not know with what justice—against the Church of England that they are too subservient to the State and that they have seldom found a champion like Bishop Philpotts of Exeter, to stand up to the Erastian lawyers. Now it appears that some of them, so far from adopting that attitude, are attempting to dictate the policy of the State.

Last July I saw a memorandum or petition signed by a large number of Church dignitaries in which they said that for the sake of International Law we must protect the profiteering ships in Spanish harbours, although the Government had warned the country generally that that might lead to a general war. I have sometimes wondered what the definition of clericalism is, but I imagine that what it amounts to is the

abuse of ecclesiastical influence in temporal affairs. If this urging of a dangerous policy on the Government is not clericalism, I do not know what is ; and it is clericalism of a peculiarly dangerous kind, exactly what brought Scotland to ruin at the battle of Dunbar when the Kirk forced poor General Leslie, against his will, to give battle to Cromwell in the plains. So I may say that we have the new Jingoës, the new Machiavellians, the new clericals, and the new profiteers ; and the Labour Party support them all. I do not think there is much more that I can say.

NOBLE LORDS. Hear, hear.

OTHER NOBLE LORDS. Go on.

LORD RANKEILLOUR. I am really rather tempted by what I hear opposite to say a little more ! Certainly we must say one thing : that though we have done, I think, our duty, and we could not, except in one particular, have done otherwise, we have not earned the gratitude of the new Government. The best we can say to them in the way of friendship is that we have been abused by their Republican opponents for having betrayed them. In that connection I rather think the speech of the noble Lord, Lord Snell, will do a certain amount of good. One point, however, that I do want to make was made before by Lord Newton, and I

hope some reply will be given to it: What was the real reason for not giving belligerent rights? It seemed the natural thing to do, according to precedent. The only defence I have so far heard is that circumstances were different because there was intervention by other Powers. Why was that? Why should it have made a difference? I cannot help thinking, as has already been said, that the real reason was that we could not get the French to agree and we did not like to go ahead without them. If there is another and a better reason, I shall be glad to hear it.

When I see accounts of military dangers of the future resulting from the present position in Spain, I cannot help thinking that some people have apparently forgotten that there is such a thing as a French fleet, let alone a British one, and that if French communications can be cut, so can Italian; that if Africa is to be the scene of possible operations in the future, Africa can be reached from the Atlantic as well as from the Mediterranean. I do not expect any such condition to arise, but it is purely futile to suppose that all the dangers are against us or against France and none against any one else. I should like to add that, if Portugal had been overrun and had become a Soviet State, our position in the Atlantic would have been very different from what it has always been. I do hope we



shall cultivate good relations with the new Government. I do not object to what some one referred to as "harmless talks in private," but to adopt a hectoring or a pharisaical air towards them would utterly undo the purpose of our policy. They deserve the fruits of their victory. They have fought for all those things for which men fight best : for their faith, for their liberty, for the traditions of their nation, for the honour of their women, for the security of their possessions ; and I thank the God of Battles that they have won.

# LAY OF A HUNGARIAN ROYALIST

*Circa 1920*

Lo our noontide hath grown grey  
And our joys have ebbd away,  
For our foes rose up against us and compassed  
us around.

And the title of our story  
Is the passing of our glory,  
And our pride and place and honour lie broken  
on the ground.

Northern height and southern plain  
Confess the Slavic reign,  
And lost is our fair haven<sup>1</sup> where the wave  
of Adria foams,  
E'en the fallen Black and Gold<sup>2</sup>  
Of our Western tilth<sup>3</sup> have hold  
And the Ruman stalls his lemans in our sever'd  
Eastern homes.<sup>4</sup>

An alien on his throne  
Made aliens' crimes our own  
A blaze of panoply had dulled our sight.

<sup>1</sup> Fiume.

<sup>3</sup> The Burgenland.

<sup>2</sup> The Austrians.

<sup>4</sup> *i.e.* In Transylvania.

LAY OF A HUNGARIAN ROYALIST

Love, mercy, ruth, denied  
We learned of aliens' pride  
The drear philosophy of naked might.

Now their eagles lie in dust  
And their cannon choke with rust  
Their leviathans are sunk in Thule's wave.  
And with life and land and treasure  
We have paid their debts full measure,  
Who put our trust in Cæsar and called not on  
God to save.

Nor Slav nor Latin power  
O'ercame us in that hour  
Our fate was linked with western strife afar.  
A four years' anguish braved  
We deemed our honour saved  
When our unbroken troops turned homewards  
from the war.

We knew not yet the worst,  
A traitor fool accurst <sup>1</sup>  
Loosed on our hearths the flood of Moscow's  
slime  
And brought us in his train  
The foul Jew's <sup>2</sup> nightmare reign,  
Renewing on our land the hell-born Mongols'  
time.

<sup>1</sup> Michael Károlyi.

<sup>2</sup> Béla Kun.

## THOUGHTS AND FANCIES

But the Duna floweth still  
Under Buda's storied hill,  
And the watchers ever guard the undying flame.  
There are steadfast men and true  
Who keep state and order due,  
Till the writs bear once again the kingly name.

Gracious lady, watch and pray  
In thine exile far away  
For the breaking of the dawn when thy son  
comes to his own ;  
When by open act and free  
A consenting world shall see  
The heir of ages mount his father's throne.

When St. Istvan shall have crowned him  
And his lieges rallied round him  
(As at Pozsony <sup>1</sup> Queen Maria and her son)  
With an " Élétunkert " swelling  
From the joy of full hearts welling,  
What was fallen shall be lifted, what was lost  
again be won.

Our valiant dead shall bless him  
And our loyal quick confess him  
From Istvan on through Hunyády<sup>1</sup> unto Horthy  
all the years,  
And God shall guide his hand  
In healing o'er his land,  
And he shall wipe away his nation's tears.

<sup>1</sup> The " y " is mute.

LAY OF A HUNGARIAN ROYALIST

Lord, grant him length of days  
Wherein to walk Thy ways,  
And raise a people pleasing in Thy sight.  
So, when his course is run  
His crown of justice won  
Shall shine upon his heirs with Thy supernal  
light.

## THE TWO HOUSES

*(Soliloquy after Francis Thompson)*

It is little I repair to the gallery above,  
Where knight and burgess wrangle down  
below.

It is little I repair to the gallery above,  
Though they still turn on the platitudes I know.  
For the red benches hold me with their soporific  
charm,

And dull my high endeavours with a soft  
narcotic balm,

And the Spiritual and Temporal mumble low,  
Mumble low, mumble low,

O my Maxton and my Kirkwood long ago !

*English Review* (March 1933).

## ECCLESIASTICAL





## SOME HANDICAPS OF THE CHURCH

EVERY man who embraces a career which at once involves specialized knowledge and active interference in the lives of his fellows makes himself necessarily an object of comment beyond the ordinary run of humanity. The lawyer whose advice in a critical situation may be so helpful or disastrous, or the doctor whose prescription may completely alter and perhaps ruin the prospects of his patient, is peculiarly likely to draw odium on himself if his professional skill brings no happy issue to those who have consulted him. The layman concerned is incapable of judging the soundness of his precepts, while sufficiently critical of the measure of his fees, and if any unfortunate mannerism or suspicion of insincerity accompanies advice which proves fruitless in the result, the most violent wrath is easily aroused. "That old fox of a lawyer," or, "that smooth-tongued charlatan of a medico," are the kinds of expression we must all of us have heard, and represent the strictures which the most skilful and con-

scientious of practitioners can hardly hope always to escape.

Of like nature must be the experience of the priest. More than the men of law or medicine, his training and knowledge are specialized and peculiar, and are enhanced to the believing mind by the sanctity of his apostolic office. His advice, however, is often given where it is not sought, and to the unbelieving or indifferent the authority he claims is an extra irritant. Moreover, his counsel, while often not less ungrateful than that of the secular professional, has no visible result to appeal to, however sound it may be and however strictly it may be followed.

Considerations such as the above will sufficiently account for a measure of hostility to the priesthood in all times and places, but it by no means explains the fierce antagonism that has been generated in some : for instance, the ferocious anti-clericalism which, if somewhat abated in France, has broken out with fresh virulence in Spain, and is, I suppose, always latent, if not explosive, in Spanish and Portuguese America. What is the origin of this sinister spirit, and is it in any way preventible ?

Some, I fancy, will say at once that persecution is an " inseparable accident " of the Church, that she is bound to incur it in the fulfilment of her mission, and that only abnegation of duty would

## SOME HANDICAPS OF THE CHURCH

avert it. This may be true without being the whole truth. The Church, going forward with her teaching, will always encounter and make enemies, but such enemies may be increased by accidental causes, wholly separable from the Church's mission. There are doubtless always malignant fanatics who hate religion for its own sake ; but these may find allies of many other descriptions who need never have been drawn into their orbit. When trouble or failure comes, it is not always the enemy's fault.

Take the effects of Nationalism, for example. It may easily happen that in some country the Church and her representatives become identified with an anti-national interest. This was the case in Bohemia for some three hundred years. In 1620 Bohemian independence was crushed by the Emperor after the battle of the White Mountain, and the country remained subject to Vienna until the end of the late war. Now Bohemia is mainly Slav, and had been Protestant, while the Emperors were German and Catholic, and therefore to ardent Bohemian patriots Catholicism appeared clothed in the garb of Teutonic tyranny. Exactly the contrary has been the case of Poland, where the Catholic and the national traditions have been mutually stimulated by opposition to Prussian

heresy or Russian schism. What might have happened in Italy had the movement for unity developed on the lines of federalism it is perhaps idle now to speculate ; but undoubtedly in the latter part of the nineteenth century a full allegiance to Church and State appeared irreconcilable to many Italian Catholics—a supposed incompatibility now happily shown to have been transitory and accidental.

A still graver condition has arisen when the current opinion of theologians has been applied as if it were essential doctrine, irrespective of the circumstances of the time. The Deposing Power, so disastrously invoked in 1570, is the outstanding instance. Never defined, and disavowed on the scaffold by a man so holy as Edmund Campion, it remained fatal to the Catholic cause and Catholic liberty in England and Ireland for two centuries, only to be explicitly repudiated in the third by a Pontiff reputed to be the most uncompromising of modern times.<sup>1</sup> It may perhaps be argued that the condemnation of the Jesuit compromise on ancestor-worship in China stands upon the same footing, but of this I cannot speak with assurance. Nothing, however, but an imperative moral duty could justify

<sup>1</sup> See Abbot Butler's *Vatican Council*, Chapter I. ; Simpson's *Life of Campion*, ed. 1896, p. 454 ; also the opinion of Pope Urban VIII. quoted by Newman (*Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, Section 3).

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a decision of which the results must have been so certain and so tragic.

Another cause of lay hostility is the possession of secular privileges by the clergy. For the relief from taxation of churches, schools, and charitable buildings a case is obvious ; but, if I mistake not, the principle of exemption has sometimes been extended to all ecclesiastical property whatsoever, with what effect on the minds of burdened taxpayers may be well imagined. It is the same with political status like the former " *État* " of the clergy in France. Clerics in political positions are exposed like ordinary politicians to the odium of taking unpopular decisions or the temptation of taking popular ones which are unjustified, and the discredit of both will be reflected on their order. I would not make it impossible for a priest exceptionally qualified like the late Dr. Seipel to take his part in the affairs of his country, but I would certainly give to no prelate as such the right of a seat in a Second Chamber. His very pride of place will impair his real power.

Then, of course, there is the accumulation of possessions. Whether their policy was justified or not, I do not suppose that the authors of the Statute of Mortmain were other than conscientious Catholics, who thought they had a real evil to deal with. The question does not

arise with us in modern England, where the needs of the Church are out of all proportion to the resources ; but I fancy that the revenues, at least before the war, of certain sees in Austria and Hungary would be hard to justify. Elsewhere the dues for marriages and funerals, having regard to the means of the people, have been the subject of comment and attack.

The clergy are often blamed for their part in secular affairs into which they have been led by circumstances rather than design. In Ireland, for example, the undue activities (as most English Catholics thought) of prelates like Archbishop Croke may be traced ultimately to the operation of the old laws of religious proscription which almost extirpated the Catholic landowners, and thereby deprived the people of their natural leaders in secular affairs. In Malta, again, the departure of the Knights left no indigenous inhabitants of prominence save the priests, except for a close corporation of the Bar. And if in some countries education became monopolized by the clergy, it was because no one else was capable of undertaking it. But, of course, leadership and influence, once acquired, are not lightly surrendered by any one.

The calumnies circulated against the Church and clergy in most, if not in all, countries are so wanton, if not outrageous, that they are apt to

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provoke a heated and indiscriminating defence. Nothing is to be gained, however, by joining battle on bad ground, or by defending the indefensible for the sake merely of supporting the right side. The sacred character of a good cause cannot be made to cover errors in political or historical or even ecclesiastical controversy. To rush in blindly in the Church's interest may be an act of chivalry, but it is not necessarily an act of wisdom unless the champion acquaints himself with the merits of the dispute, and if to want of knowledge and discrimination the Catholic protagonist adds personal acrimony and want of charity—and how often does this happen!—he does positive and substantial harm to his sacred cause.

There is a hymn written by Fr. Faber in a mood of pessimism which contains the following lines :

The Church, the Sacraments, the Faith,  
Their uphill journey take,  
Lose here what there they gain, and when  
We lean upon them, break.

Poets must not be taken too literally, or it might be possible to frame a serious indictment against the writer of these strange words, but undoubtedly they express a feeling of dis-

couragement which all but the most insensitive must have sometimes felt. Do those who feel it ever reflect that some steps towards better things may be in their own hands, and that for some things that go amiss the blame is within and not without ? I fear that too many Catholics feel no sense of corporate responsibility for the progress of the Church at all. When they have done what they think their individual duty to their individual souls, they let everything else drift. And even those who wish to do something are too apt to look to high places for a lead. Of course, ecclesiastical authority must always have the last word, but it is too much to expect it always to have the first. "Don't wait to be told to do something—do it first and report it afterwards," I remember Archbishop Ireland saying ; but there are too many who are afraid of what may be said to them when their report is made.

I do not hesitate to say that there is far too much moral timidity linked with inertia among the laity in England. They do not speak their minds as they might on Church affairs. Not that for one moment I would encourage a carping, nagging spirit towards their ecclesiastical leaders among the laity. If, however, there is to be an active and intelligent interest in the life of the Church, some degree of criticism is an



inevitable complement of that interest. For example, in some diocese there may be an ambitious building project for which subscriptions are urgently asked. In such a case it is hard to see how interest can be sustained in the enterprise without the expected contributors forming their own ideas as to its æsthetic and financial aspects, and if they do form their ideas it is surely their duty to express them, not to give perfunctorily and grumble privately. It is their affair, in the broad sense, as much as their Diocesan's or his Chapter's.

In an earlier generation every development of Catholic life in England was warmly canvassed and discussed. Certainly there were abuses at that time—for example, the indefensible licence of the *Rambler*, counterbalanced, perhaps, by the then intolerant rigour of the *Dublin Review*. But are such controversies worse than tepidity, and is not their absence a symptom of inertia? What does it really matter if a writer here and there goes beyond the line? He will be corrected and find his level, and a just view of the issue will be evolved. But if any one has real constructive ideas, he must proclaim them with constant iteration if apathy is to be destroyed and prejudice broken through. I think it was Sir William Harcourt who said that no one ever paid the smallest attention to anything new

unless it was repeated at least seven times in the selfsame words.

We have a number of excellent societies for various objects, but we have no proper organ for the interchange or expression of representative opinion, whether clerical or lay. I am told that the opportunity of the clergy to express themselves in Synod has so completely and for so long become a mere form, that to take advantage of it would be regarded as a revolutionary act. Yet once it must have had a real meaning and purpose, and might in some form or other be revived. Why, to take the lowest ground, should the clergy be debarred from the hygienic exercise of letting off steam which is so comforting to mankind at large? And they might surely have something to say which it would not be amiss for Bishops and Chapters to listen to. Authority, and especially ecclesiastical authority, is quite strong enough to suffer no harm from the freest talk.

The laity, of course, can join bodies such as the Catholic Union, Catholic Association, or the like; but if they do, they will find that their society is not regarded as representative outside its own members, and of course there is some ground for this criticism. No society privately and voluntarily recruited can be properly called representative. Some unit for a constituency

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must be taken which covers the whole ground. Why not have Diocesan Councils chosen by the parishes? Personally, I would start with responsible Parish Councils; but, failing these, the parish representative on the Diocesan Council might be elected at a general meeting of the congregation—subject, it might be, to the veto of the Rector. Of course the Diocesan Councils would have no power; but none the less they might be exceedingly useful in discussion and suggestion and letting the authorities know what was generally thought. Further, there might be Provincial Joint Committees of the Diocesan Councils, and perhaps even a Central National Committee representing all the Councils which might meet on the occasion of some emergency.

Of course I am well aware that any such bodies as I suggest will be denounced as unnecessary and mischievous conglomerations of interfering busybodies. That many foolish things would be said at their discussions is certain; that some foolish resolutions would be passed is probable. I am certain, however, that there would be a balance of advantage. The mere fact of free ventilation of ideas would destroy false notions and chimerical projects. And when the froth had subsided, I believe definite practical projects for the advantage of

the Church would emerge, and our harassed administrators would be sensibly relieved.<sup>1</sup> At present the laity as a whole do not pull their weight. There are movements enough and to spare, sometimes overlapping and competing ; but while funds and energy are often dissipated, there are reserves of energy and willingness untouched. I know there are projects for the co-operation of various societies through some elected Council, but there are immense difficulties in the way of such a policy. Give every adult Catholic, resident in a parish, man or woman, some place and status, be it only advisory, in the organization of the Church's temporal work, and you will bring in a host of workers in whom trust will beget responsibility. Have your limitations, if you will—no politics on the one hand, no interference in spirituals on the other—and remember the constituted authority above. But let all feel that they have a part and lot in the Church's work, and you will get a *λατρεία*, a "reasonable service," worth far more to the glory of God and the help of man than mechanical loyalty or grudging contribution.

*Dublin Review* (October 1932).

<sup>1</sup> For example an organization might be worked out for the quick tracing of removals, which must be a constant source of leakage.

## SOME ACCIDENTALS OF THE CHURCH

THERE are certain things in the discipline, uses, or traditions of the Catholic Church to which we in Western Christendom have grown so accustomed that it is difficult for us to imagine them otherwise. Such are the celibacy of the clergy, the use of the Latin language in the Mass and liturgy, and the predominance of Italians in the Church's government. Were it possible it would be interesting to discover how many Catholics in England realize that millions of the faithful receive the Sacraments from married priests and hear Mass in a language other than Latin ; though no doubt a greater number are aware that it is for no such very long period, as the Church counts time, that the Italian tradition has been unbroken. It is no part of the purpose of this article to dwell at length on the merits of these three subjects, which I cite as illustrations of the distinction between the essential and accidental, but perhaps a word may be said on two of them before opening on the main theme.

On the Italian matter I will only say that the Lateran Treaty may well prove the beginning of a new epoch with dangers as well as advantages of its own. If on the one hand the present good relations between Church and State endure, and on the other Italy continues to play an assertive and perhaps aggressive part as a Great Power, something like the Avignon position may arise or seem to have arisen. In the difficulties that might then ensue it is easy to foresee that a solution might be sought in the choice of a spiritual ruler from outside not only Italy, but Europe, and it is hard to imagine a finer demonstration of the Catholicity of the Church and her diversified unity than would be afforded by the spectacle of the throne of St. Peter being ascended by a prelate from the Middle West. But this, of course, is a speculative conception.

With regard to the Latin language, the advantages of a uniform medium are obvious, and it is only the wholly illiterate who have any excuse if they fail to follow in their prayer-books the order of the Church for the Holy Sacrifice. Moreover, as regards at least Slav Uniates, the congregation are hardly more likely to understand the words than Italians do Latin. None the less, it could be wished that outside the Mass the English language could be

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pressed into the service of the Church in some more effective way than has yet been found. It is surprising to find the hold that the Anglican Church service has upon many whose personal faith one would imagine weak, and it has been long since pointed out how great a support to English Protestantism has been rendered by the beauty of the Authorized Version. Is it impossible to devise some prayer of real literary excellence in which the whole congregation could join after the principal Mass on Sundays? And could not something better be found than the present optional jejune prayers by which funerals are sometimes ended? Many are moved by the beauty of words to whom music makes no appeal, and words will linger longer than sounds in the memories and the hearts of men.

There is one aspect of Latinism to which a short allusion may be forgiven. There are those who, irritated doubtless by the absurdities of what is known as the "Nordic" school, seem to dwell on the merits of Latin culture to an extent that almost suggests that other traditions and conceptions are alien to the true spirit of the Church. This notion is surely in flat contradiction to the essential meaning of the word "Catholic." The Œcumenical body, which on its human side was of Semitic origin

and Byzantine expansion, which has absorbed and adapted the wisdom of Greek philosophy no less than the traditions of Roman government, cannot be bound inseparably by the "*genius loci*" of the seat of authority. It was well, no doubt, that Roman spiritual power through the Saxon Church prevailed over Celtic ideas at the Synod of Whitby, but it does not follow that either Celt or Saxon need bow before Latin conceptions as apart from Catholic discipline. If I feel more at home (as in fact I do) in a Slav or Teutonic than in a Latin country, let it not be counted to me for disloyalty, and let us not be reproached if we prefer our traditions of law and politics to those prevailing in the Latin world.

In truth, the Church in the course of her long history has appeared under many masks, to the indifferent or hostile without and to the faithful within her fold. To the Jewish hierarchy she was an association of heretics and rebels. To the Roman world she was an Oriental sect, suspect because of her Jewish connections and regarded as one of the channels which poured Eastern corruption into the metropolis of the world, "*quo cuncta atrocia aut pudenda confluunt.*" To the barbarian she was the mysterious ally of a powerful but decadent Empire ; to the mediæval tyrant often the sole and hated obstacle in the



way of his ambitions ; to revolutionaries she has been a prop of civil tyranny ; to the ardent nationalist an alien power ; and to many a modern scientist the intangible enemy that is indifferent to the merits of his discoveries and the permanent values he would fain ascribe to them. Conversely, to her children, in different times and places she has shown herself as the protector of the poor, the refuge or promoter of learning, the pillar of social order, or the organizer and inspirer of patriotic sentiment. In all these ascriptions, for better for worse, there is some partial or temporary truth or at least a colourable presentment, but in none of them are the essential attributes and end of God's edifice on earth revealed.

I looked lately, after many years, into Newman's *Lectures on the Difficulties of Anglicans*, first published in 1850. Delivered at a time of strife and tension, they have a directly polemical character, and as in the kindred volume, *The Present Position of Catholics*, I think a vigilant critic may find passages in them in which an argument or illustration is asked to carry more than it can properly bear. The author himself dwells in his preface on the ephemeral nature of the issues with which he deals, yet his readers, after more than eighty years, will find much of universal application, whatever may be the

shifting phenomena of the world and of mankind. This is, I think, especially the case with the eighth and ninth lectures, which deal with the true mission of the Church and with the manifestations of popular religion.

The Church's aim, he insists and re-insists, is to save the individual soul, first and last and all the time, and all else is secondary and accidental.

I do not, of course, deny [he says] that the Church does a great deal more than she promises. She fulfils a number of secondary ends and is the means of numberless temporal blessings. I only say that she is not to be measured by such effects, and if you think she is, then I must reckon you with Erastians. . . .

It is one thing to say that prosperity ought to follow religion, another to say that it must follow from it. . . .

There may be particular and most valid reasons in the scheme of Divine Providence, whatever be the legitimate tendency of the Catholic Faith, for its being left from time to time without any striking manifestation of its beneficial action upon the temporal interests of mankind.

And then, changing his theme somewhat, he

dwells on some of the outward effects, often repellent to many, of corporate and popular religion when it permeates a mixed mass of varied and peccant humanity.

Now, of course, there is nothing new in what Newman says, he merely expresses and exposes a universal truth in his inimitable way. But his words are none the less worth quoting, because from the common premisses of the Church's Mission very different deductions have been, and are being, and will be drawn. I will not say in this connection that there are two schools of Catholic writers, but there are certainly two tendencies among them when they dwell on the problems that arise from the consideration of the nature and effects of the Church's Mission.

There was in my youth—and perhaps still is—a certain class of writer who, not content with the truism that temporal interests must be sacrificed when they clash with spiritual necessities, seemed to think it necessary to hug and gloat over their, often imaginary, temporal chains. Oblivious of the epochs of Constantine and Justinian and, *longo intervallo*, of Charlemagne, they wrote as if the poverty and abasement of the faithful were almost an essential mark of the Church. They were constantly drawing a contrast between the flaunting prosperity of the infidel or heretic and the straitened humility of

the elect. If reproached with the backwardness of Catholic countries, they seemed lukewarm in denying the assertion or proving exaggeration in cases when it could be done, or in showing how accidental was the connection between religion and stagnation. If a case of bad sanitation were alleged against a particular town, they would irrelevantly answer that the inhabitants were virtuous, as if godliness and cleanliness were incompatible alternatives. To this type of mind the civic patriotism of St. Paul is wholly alien. It hardly regards the problems of civic society as of any interest except in so far as they may illustrate the evils that flow from neglect of the moral law, or indicate likely occasions for a suitable exhibition of Divine chastisement. Such a temper has presumably always existed throughout the phases of Church history. It runs naturally into Novatianism or perhaps again into Quietism, and it has its counterparts outside the Church. It acts also as a grave handicap and discouragement to the legitimate aspirations of the faithful, and as an excuse and cover for selfish isolation and repulsive sloth.

At the present time, however, there is observable a wholly different tendency. Writers and preachers are invoking the teaching of the Church to cure the temporal evils of humanity.

Whether the causes and manifestations of these evils be economic or political, we are asked to look to "Catholic principles" for a remedy. Are they not asking what they have no right to expect? What promise has ever been given of economic infallibility or that prosperity will necessarily follow virtue and temporal chastisement fall on vice? What about the rebuke to those who drew false inferences from the disaster at Siloam? Does not the rain fall equally on the just and unjust, whether in gentle irrigation or destructive flood? Are we to claim for the Church a lead in—for example—finance and problems of currency which we neither expect nor desire in natural science?

Of course I am very far from denying that the precepts of the Church are capable of defence on purely temporal grounds. For example, the veto on the marriage of uncles and nieces is good eugenics. Also the condemnation of Malthusianism appears most strikingly justified at present by the unprecedented manner in which production has outrun consumption. Further, we may say generally that the world would be a vastly simpler planet if every one observed the moral law as expounded by the Church. But admitting all this, it is a very large deduction that by searching the teachings of Ss. Albert and Thomas, or the latest Roman

textbooks of moral theology, we can decide whether gold should be the universal medium of exchange or whether silver can be united with it at a fixed ratio.

The kind of writer whom I have in mind is apt to refer to a happy condition when a spirit of unquestioning faith and European brotherhood prevailed under the parental care of Pope and Church, and when the class warfare and economic difficulties which now beset us were as yet unknown. I wonder what dates they would assign to the beginning and end of this Golden Age. It cannot include the period of spiritual decadence which ended with Hildebrand, but does it embrace the time of which St. Bernard wrote his *Hora novissima tempora pessima* or the Pagan reign of Frederic the Second and the time of the licence of the Paris schools? What of the Avignon period or the Anti-Popes, or the social and political evils that followed on the calamity of the Black Death? What of the conditions that led to the Vehmgericht in Germany, to the Jacquerie in France, and to the depopulation of the countryside that followed on the development of the wool trade here?

Undoubtedly there was a unity in Europe, and of that unity the Church was the cement and the Pope the keystone, but the extent of that

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unity and of the benefits that flowed from it are surely often greatly overstated, and some at least of its causes are ignored. The great slice of Eastern Europe whose faith was of Byzantine inception and connection had no part in the unity at all. And in the West I would submit that the unity was due not solely to a community of faith but to two circumstances that were accidental to the age. I mean the breakdown of the Civil Power and the practical monopoly of learning in the Church.

In his masterly introductory chapter to the *History of the Vatican Council* Abbot Butler shows how the assertion of temporal power by Hildebrand was acquiesced in because the Papacy was the only authority which commanded the general respect of Christendom. But he thinks it evident that the strain of universal secular government was beyond the capacity allowed even to the greatest of mortal men. After the disruption of Charlemagne's Empire the Church seemed the only surviving organ of civilization in Western and Central Europe, and it became her duty in common charity to grapple with the prodigious material evils of the age, just as in the case of a municipal breakdown in a cathedral city a Bishop may have to organize relief for the sick or starving in times of pestilence or famine. No doubt

theologians constructed a theory of a Divine origin for the Pope's temporal authority, but this was never universally accepted, and after centuries of disputation and challenge it was at last definitely repudiated by one of the most militant of pontiffs little more than sixty years ago. In fact the Popes exercised a jurisdiction by consent, and the consent was owing to the patent fact that the Church gave evidence of a persistence in power and vitality for richer for poorer, through persecution or through scandals, which no secular institution could rival. But for all that this jurisdiction was an "accidental" unknown in the ancient period of the Church and unexercised in modern times.

In like manner the survival of learning was due to the reverence felt for the Church and her institutions wherever the population was at least nominally Christian. In the darkest of times before and after the millennium the libraries of the monasteries were usually safe from the marauder. There only, speaking broadly, was education possible, and even when some of the pupils had no intention of becoming clerics they must soon have lost much of what they had learnt when they emerged into the rude atmosphere of an unlettered world. Only churchmen could keep in touch with scholarship and the movements of thought in other countries, and



only churchmen found a road for their ambitions by other means than hereditary possessions or the sword. Not by design but by the mere process of events, churchmen became monopolists of letters, and formed an intellectual oligarchy that knew little of national bounds. Before languages had crystallized and in lands where vernacular literature was hardly known, they corresponded in a common medium and on their travels found in the guest-houses of the monasteries safe resting-places and congenial society. But again the unity thus engendered was not of the essence of the Church's Mission, and was destined in time to perish even in countries between which the bond of the faith remained.

In this argument I do not forget the Emperor, but his area of practical jurisdiction was restricted. I imagine people thought little of him in England, and in Scotland, Ireland, and Scandinavia less. The conception, none the less, of a secular head of Christendom whose office was second only in sanctity to the Pope's must have impressed the nations with a sense of community, even though the spiritual and temporal potentates were at violent and constant variance. But here again the theoretical dualism of the government of the world, and the mutual advantages of the theory to the governors, constitute an "accidental" in the Church's

history which we may now recall but can hardly realize.

It is often argued or assumed that the disruption of Christendom, as Christendom was understood, say, in the year 1200, was the work of the Reformation, but surely that catastrophe was but the extension of a process that had long been active. The position of the Emperor was never the same after the death of Frederic the Second in 1252 ; the temporal influence of the Papacy was never the same since the French domination that caused the seizure of Boniface VIII. in 1302 and was the prelude to the Avignon period. The monopoly of learning was broken by the development of the universities and the growth of schools of lay jurists well before the movement we know as the Renaissance. The definition of national languages, the growth of national literatures, the development of national laws, were all disruptive factors ; while the fifteenth century showed a steady growth of national consciousness and separation through the consolidation of Spain and France and our own forced withdrawal from the Continent. Lastly, it would be idle to deny that the admitted scandals of the period gravely impaired the prestige of the Popes, and thereby their unifying power.

This process of disintegration was, of course,

greatly hastened by the Reformation, but it has only culminated in quite recent times. It was a strange illusion indeed that captured the imagination of men in the middle of last century and was most strikingly evident at the time of the Great Exhibition. Perhaps it was not unnatural to suppose that the discoveries of science, the diffusion of knowledge, the growth of communications, would lead to an approach to the brotherhood of man ; but the exact contrary has been the case. Education has intensified diversities, if only by fomenting the revival of dying languages and fanning the embers of historical controversies. Communications have brought men easily together in associations and conferences for the accentuation of racial differences and the embitterment of national antagonisms. The subsequent success of nationalist aspirations has extended the number and narrowed the boundaries of fiscal units. The discoveries of science have multiplied and rendered far more terrible the mechanism of human destruction.

Such is the state of Europe to-day. Just as its latest phase was not caused by religious disunion, so there seems little chance, humanly speaking, that a community in the Faith (or in any belief) will do much for unity. Certainly between individual Catholics it is a great bond of charity,

but in large corporate political issues it seems powerless against national or racial forces. To a great degree this is nothing new. In the seventeenth century France fought Spain, and England Holland. Richelieu saved the Protestant cause in Germany and subsidized the Scottish Covenanters against a king who at least wished to show toleration to Catholics. Some decades earlier the whole force of Spanish diplomacy was exerted to prevent the reconciliation of Henry the Fourth of France to the Church. At the present time religion hardly appears to be a force even for the mitigation of temporal hatreds. Do French Catholics love Bavarians better than Prussians? Would the Germans and Slavs under Italian rule have any more to complain of if they were Protestants? Is the Polish Government much more sympathetic to the Ruthenian Uniates than to the Ruthenian Orthodox? Would De Valera be better disposed to England if a Catholic king were on the throne?

I well remember the incidents known as the "Wreschen Scandals," when Polish children were whipped and their parents imprisoned for their refusal (of course instigated) to learn their religion through a German catechism. Being on my travels not long after, I obtained an introduction to the arch-persecutor, the Director of

Education of the Province of Posen. He was a bearded, spectacled man of a pronounced old-fashioned professorial type. Honest, diligent, a sincere and indeed rigid Catholic, and possessed, I should say, of the imagination of a bullock, he impressed on me a great regard for his character, but also a conviction that any Slav would wish to kill him after an hour's acquaintance. During the same tour I was assured by a German prelate, who seemed by no means of an intolerant disposition, that it was very difficult to get the Polish clergy to take a proper interest in the minority of German Catholic children, while I have been told that in Westphalia the Polish immigrants show the utmost repugnance to the ministrations of German priests. Between the Teuton and the Slav there is a greater gulf fixed than between the Saxon and the Celt, and religion does not bridge it. So is it in some measure everywhere, for better or for worse, where race or nationality are the dividing factors.

I say for better or for worse because this breakdown of religion as a binding factor in international politics does not in practice work wholly for evil. When the expression "the Catholic Powers" meant something real there were obvious reactions in non-Catholic countries. The last acute persecution of Catholics in Eng-

land, under Charles the Second, though against his will, owed its strength, if I mistake not, less to the calumnies of Oates than to the notion that Catholics and their friends at Court were acting as the agents of French designs. For precisely the converse reasons the position of Huguenots must have been gravely compromised before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Up to our own times the Christian subjects of the Sultan suffered not so much for their religion as because they were thought the instruments of Russian aggression. Now that the great Powers of the world have ceased to be labelled with names of religion (or, if they are, the label is meaningless), these complications, so terrible sometimes for patriotic religious minorities, no longer arise. I only trust that Signor Mussolini will never attempt to assume the title of Defender of the Faith. Were he to do so with any success or plausibility, the enemies of the Church in France would rejoice and the sufferings of the Croats would be intensified.

I have heard, and I think read, suggestions that the Pope should be asked to pronounce on the moral rights and wrongs of disputes between nations as they arise and should call upon the faithful to support his judgments by political action in their several countries. The idea seems

happily as impracticable as it is mischievous. The mere attempt at mediation so nobly conceived by the late Pope was suspected and repudiated alike by Ludendorff and Allied stalwarts. What would the reactions have been had he tried to impose himself as an arbitrator with injunctions to all Catholics to lend sanctions to his decisions? And how could the present Pope have been asked to give judgment (let us say) as to the bombardment of Corfu by the Italian fleet? Great occasions may conceivably arise when a great pronouncement may be worth the risk or may be necessary at any risk; but that the Pope, in the midst of his solicitude for all the Churches, should permanently assume the functions of Geneva and the Hague in a temporal sphere in which no special guidance has been promised him is surely the culmination of fantastic idealism. What was an "accidental" possibility in Hildebrand's time would, if conceivable at all, mean a catastrophic disaster in the modern world.

My argument has taken me over many points, but I trust has kept within relevance to my main object, which is to show that aspects which the Church has worn in the past, policies with which she has been associated, and temporal benefits which she has promoted, have been accidental to her mission, and that to expect her to cure

the material ills of humanity is too often to ask for a disappointment. To say she gives her children a capacity for innocent enjoyment in prosperity and for fortitude in adversity is one thing—but to claim that she can always show a way through mundane difficulties and complications is another. Even in matters where right and wrong were immediately involved her action perforce has often been slow—*e.g.* in the abolition of slavery under the old Empire, or of the “*jus primæ noctis*” of later times. It had never been promised her that she could avert war, pestilence, or famine, or social unrest or economic depression or financial disorder, and to expect her to perform what she has never undertaken is to provoke disillusion, the spiritual reaction from which may be disastrous. St. Peter was neither economist nor financier; whatever he may have known about the fish-market, he did not even do the catering for the embryo Church, and why should we expect his successors to possess the wisdom of both worlds? Yet there is often apparent in current utterances of Catholics a tendency to suggest that by some latent power in their religion the rough places of the world may be made smooth. With this tendency is often associated another, namely to rail and gibe at the operations of capital, whether in the hands of producers or of lenders. More-



over, the two classes of capitalists—in other words, the manufacturers and financiers—are often confusedly blended in the indictment although their interests are often divergent and sometimes conflicting. In all this there is neither reason nor charity. That there are grave abuses natural to manufacture I would not deny, though in our country it has been a main object of our legislation for nearly three generations to mitigate them—and doubtless there are serious abuses in finance, especially if in some countries the supply of credit is concentrated in a few hands. Be this as it may however, to suppose that they could be replaced any more than policemen by the nominees of theologians is an idle dream. It seems sometimes to be assumed that modern finance is a creation of yesterday; but, to say nothing of the more restricted operations of the Medici, it certainly dates back to the great house of Fugger, of Augsburg and Antwerp, in the sixteenth century. I do not suppose that at the height of their pride the Rothschilds ever enjoyed such influence as Anton von Fugger, and he used it unsparingly in the Catholic cause. Humanly speaking, he saved the Church in South Germany by his advances to the Emperor when the Lyons bankers failed to raise a loan for the Protestant Leaguers, and by the irony of fate his house was

in the end brought low by bad debts from the Kings of Spain. Incidentally, it may be remarked that Sir Thomas Gresham, the father of English finance, learnt his business from the Fuggers' Antwerp branch.

Sir Arthur Salter has shown in his book *Recovery* how complicated are the financial wheels of the world and how lacking they are in any central direction. There are thousands employed in the processes of finance, but each of the practical men understands only his own process, and the theorists alone profess to be able to understand the whole. The result is only too apparent in the slow, clumsy, laborious attempts to re-set the dislocated joints of a suffering world. To my mind the financier of to-day, so far from being an object of execration, is at least as much an object of pity as the rest of his fellow-sufferers. When the great Credit Anstalt fell, though all the resources of the Rothschilds were behind it, and nearly dragged all Germany down, it showed how precarious were the foundations of financial power. So far from being the malevolent secret despots of the world, financiers are, in these times at any rate, just fallible, struggling, and anxious individuals, and at all times I have found in those of them I know a really quite astonishing resemblance to the generality of other men. But, whatever

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their qualities or defects, they will have to find a way out of the morass without the aid of applied theology, which is no more likely to solve their difficulties than it would problems of chemistry or medicine. It will be an "accident" if the Church can help them.

At this point some critic may well say, "Is there, then, nothing to be done? Are you not reverting to that very attitude of passive isolation which you condemned? Cannot Catholic principles be applied to the relief of a stricken world?" The answer is, They can be so applied, but not usually by any organized external corporate effort. It is by the individual doing his individual duty according to his own conscience in his own sphere that we must fulfil our task.

One of the best men I ever knew, a priest and schoolmaster, was accustomed to concentrate his spiritual teaching to his pupils very largely on three points: the sacramental life, the virility of continence, and the sanctification of secular activities. I am sure that his doctrine on the last point is applicable beyond the private life of individuals. It is by the percolation of truth and right into every department of life that in these times, so far as the laity can discharge it, the mission of the Church must be made effective. It was once the fashion to dwell

in glowing terms on the faith and piety of primitive populations who lived under traditional conditions which must inevitably change under modern communications and contagious fashions. Is it not better to trace the workings of grace in the centres of restless life and godlessness and see how religion will keep the merchant honest, the lawyer straightforward, the soldier tolerant, the politician high-minded, and the workman patient? The fruits of these things can come neither by isolation nor organization, but by the natural action of men and women living up to their convictions while following strenuously their several ways.

Of course there must be organizations, but they should not go beyond the spheres of some definite objective work, *e.g.*, the defence of schools, the correction of mis-statements, the insistence on full civic equality, resistance to immoral propaganda, and the Catholic interests involved must be clear and unambiguous. Scientists, economists, and legislators must be fought when their acts or dogmas conflict with religion or the moral law, but we cannot ourselves, by virtue of our religion, teach science or politics. If we try, we shall be making exactly the converse error to those of whom we justly complain when they try to destroy theology by physics. Let us oppose, *e.g.*, licensed

euthanasia as immoral, but do not let us pretend, like the Christian Scientists, that we have a specific for enabling the sufferer to forget his pain. History is full of misapplied theology, and we have warnings enough lest we add to the instances. The most striking example that I can recall is the theological domination of strategy that occurred at the battle of Dunbar. Here the Scottish forces appear to have been in an impregnable position, but the Ministers of the Kirk insisted that they should go forth in the name of the Lord and destroy the invader in the plain. Poor General Leslie knew better, but the Kirk prevailed, and a decisive victory lay with Cromwell, who was not similarly afflicted by the Independent clergy. No doubt it is difficult to imagine Catholic prelates either able or willing to play a like part at General Headquarters, but none the less it may easily be that *de nobis fabula narrabitur*, whether the scene be a battlefield or a legislative building.

The Church has suffered grievously in certain countries through an accidental association with dynasties, and may suffer also by like association with political parties or with schools of thought. So great is her assimilative power that we are apt to forget that the things assimilated to her current teaching are often not of the essence of her message to the world and may be re-

placed by rival systems. The Aristotelian philosophy was not accepted as tenable without the bitterest theological opposition, and a synthesis with newer schools may yet be made. Or look at the history of Copernicanism. It was tolerated as a permissible hypothesis long before it became a temporary danger through the aggressive dogmatism of Galileo. There was then created a living menace to the faithful, but neither the consequent reaction to the Ptolemaic system nor its subsequent abandonment were anything but accidentals when set against the deposit of eternal truth. As in philosophy and astronomy, so it may be in politics and economics, and they would indeed "halve the Gospel of God's grace" who would deny the transforming and sanctifying power He has left in things temporal to His Church. *Μέγας ἐν τούτοις θεός οὐδὲ γηράσκει.*

Nevertheless, to transform and sanctify is not to incorporate. The Church can use, discard, and dispense with the power and thought of man. On the other hand, man has no right to look to the Church for a path through the jungle of his earthly cares. Perhaps things are not meant to be too easy for us and we are intended to grope our way unaided, save that the Church can keep us unstained by the mud through which our feet must pass. But in finding our road we must surely use all the secondary gifts which

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God has given us beyond the Faith to the utmost of our several energies and powers. It is not by withdrawal from the world, it is not by mass attack on the world, it is by doing our duty in the world that we can get interest on our talents, whether they be one or ten. May we be able to say of ourselves—and here, once more, I come back to Newman :

*Felices quibus in omni re haec usu venit  
... . ars sublimior  
Bona amplectendi, non amplectendi mala  
Dubiam ut vitae percurrentibus viam  
Amittat terra id omni quod terram sapit  
Et plus quam proprio vestiatur lumine.*<sup>1</sup>

*Dublin Review* (July 1933).

<sup>1</sup> These lines are from the prologue to Newman's expurgated acting edition of the *Phormio* of Terence. I have made a free and inadequate rendering as follows :

“Blest they who can the Higher Art apply  
The good in all to clasp, the ill pass by.  
The earth for them its savour shall resign  
Of all things earthly and for them shall shine,  
As life's dark path they tread, with borrowed gleam divine.”

# FICTION



*All the characters in this story are purely imaginary, and  
have no relation to any living person.*

## THE CASE OF MILLY SENNEN

### I

MILLICENT, wife of the Earl of Sennen, commonly known as Milly Sennen, was an extremely dangerous woman, and very much the more dangerous because in some ways she was particularly nice. Thirty years old, of brilliant wit and the rarest loveliness, she combined the energy of youth with the assurance of experience. She was no deliberate siren, but a strong, eager, vital creature, loving sport and action and excitement ; and though she can hardly have been unaware of the potency of her beauty she never used it of set purpose for the enslavement of man, which came to pass without volition of her own. Kind, generous, fearless, sympathetic, and unaffected, she was essentially a loyal friend and good comrade to man and woman, and withal she had a clear, balanced male mind, like Portia—an unusual complement of female charm. She was not a woman of violent passions, but ever since she had been an

exquisite toddling child she had had everything she casually desired, and if in the course of her numerous male friendships it occurred to her that it would be pleasant to go beyond the line—she just went without a tremor or a twinge. Of religion and virtue she was eminently tolerant, fully recognizing their advantages to society, but being of opinion that in her case they could wait. To the conceptions of sin and duty she was a stranger, but while it could not be said of her, as of St. Augustine, that she ever prayed to be good some day, yet she did occasionally entertain the thought that the possibilities of a future life might be worth considering when one was quite sure one had had the best of this. She had read some works of popular materialism, but had conceived no less distaste to their conclusions in theory than she showed to some of the precepts of Christianity in practice. She had been married ten years and had quarrelled with her slow-witted husband after eighteen months. Since then she had had three paramours in succession, to each of whom she was faithful till she gave him notice, and the third of whom was still in favour when this story opens. Sennen on his side had found steady, and it is fair to add sole, consolation in a good-natured vulgar priestess of the lighter drama. Neither husband nor wife entertained the idea

of divorce, feeling quite comfortable as they were, and both kept up all possible appearances that were not too irksome. In particular their respective favourites were never seen within their two homes, which were managed with great efficiency and decorum. They had had one child, who had died immediately.

Now on the aforesaid Milly Sennen, being the woman she was and as above described, there fell a stroke of a blinding suddenness comparable almost in a small way to the experience of Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road. She was driving from London one sunny April morning to some point-to-point races, fifty miles out, with her special friend and confidante Jenny Townsend, a woman of similar tastes and character, but of a more definitely seductive type. Milly was an excellent driver, very quick of eye and wrist, and she could manage anything up to a four-in-hand or the heaviest lorry (she had proved it in the Strike), for the strength of her arms was abnormal in woman, and her fair white hands had a grip of steel. The two women were talking of the death, at the age of forty-six, of a common acquaintance after the birth of a baby, the youngest of her other six children being a month or two over ten. Jenny had been to her house to inquire, and the dying woman, hearing of it somehow,

had insisted on her being shown up. "I want you to know," she said in gasps, "that I've had a splendid life, and I'm having a splendid death. It's 'killed in action,' isn't it, and that's the best way to go out. Good-bye, and may you fare as well." "And she meant it all," said Jenny; "but I wonder if she knew what sort I am. I couldn't but admire her pluck, but that's not quite our style, is it?" "No, indeed," Milly agreed, "that's out of our line altogether." And she gave a little soft unpleasant laugh, as one who understands but scorns.

At this moment they were driving along a lane which saved them a mile or two, but was narrow and with some sharp corners. Milly had rounded one of these, right-handed and hardly wide enough, when she was aware of a van bearing down on her in the middle of the lane. At the same time a small car on the near side, containing a farmer and his daughter (he, too, was going racing after seeing to his roots), started a little in front of the point the women's car had now reached. Milly, distracted just a trifle by her reflections on the story she had heard, miscalculated the possibilities by a few seconds, and instead of drawing back behind the farmer, tried to cut in between the two. What exactly happened will never be known, but when two men came up from the root-field they found all

three vehicles overturned, and the only person certainly alive was a young man from the back of the van who was walking round in circles, head in hands, and babbling of strange things.

Milly awoke to half-consciousness in a darkened room with an intolerable pain at the back of her head and no slight aches in other places. She was at that point of prostration and misery at which even curiosity is dormant. Once she stirred and tried to sit up, but a quiet voice told her with authority to lie back, and she soon relapsed into an uneasy sleep. Later she was aware that there was light about her, and another voice said distantly but clearly, "She'll do now—much better than the other poor thing; she's as strong as a horse, but look out for the reaction when she's really conscious." And then all was dark again. Slowly, very slowly, there came back to her mind the fair spring morning, the blue sky dappled with light white clouds, the swift progress along the lane, and then the sharp corner, the menacing van, the farmer's car starting just ahead. As yet she could draw no inference from it all except that she would be late for the first race, in which her favoured friend was riding. Gradually she realized that something must have happened, and then she recognized the nurse's uniform, and knew.

Through most unaccustomed tears of weakness, through bouts of nausea and recurrent exhaustion, she painfully regained the balance of her mind, and in spite of some futile quibbles and obstruction she arrived by her questions at the exact truth. Jenny was alive, but in grievous case from internal injuries rather than concussion. The farmer and the van driver were dead. The farmer's daughter had a broken thigh and was likely to be a life-long cripple. The youth from the back of the van was still deranged. Only she herself of the six involved was on the road to a complete recovery.

They took the depositions of the two ladies with a consideration that was perhaps excessive, though, in any case, a real cross-examination was impossible. Anyhow, no question was asked that occasioned any temptation to perjury. The two other survivors could testify to nothing, the youth because his wits were addled, the girl because she had been searching her pockets for her admission card to the races at the moment. Three witnesses were able to declare that the van was being recklessly driven on the wrong side a little earlier, and Milly could truthfully say that had the driver been where he should she could quite easily have cleared the gap. The Coroner said there was no evidence on which either Milly or the farmer could be

censured, and the jury, being unwilling to condemn the dead, brought in "death by misadventure," with due expressions of condolence.

A few days later Milly was told that Mrs. Townsend wished to see her, and was very bad. She rose accordingly and limped across the corridor with a bandaged head, a bruised cheek, a sewn-up nose, and a broken thumb, besides concealed injuries. Jenny was lying very white and still, but her features had been spared, and there was her wonted mockery and humour in the bright eyes and the taunting mouth. "I've seen you looking better, Milly," was her greeting; "but that's not all I want to tell you. The truth is, I'm going fast, and they don't deny it now. Two women driving in a car, it's Scripture brought to date, isn't it? One shall be taken and one left, and you're the one that's left, my dear. If it had been the other way, what would you be thinking now? We've been a hefty pair of sinners, but God has given *me* my chance. I won't take the morphia, because it's the pain that's been teaching me the truth. Just give me one kiss, and go away and think about it. Yes, and though it seems unkind, I'd rather you didn't come again. You're too much part of the bad old life." So much, and no more, said Jenny, and then closed her eyes exhausted, and Milly tottered away speechless



and forthwith swooned upon her bed. These emotional proceedings were most disconcerting in her weak state, and her will-power seemed wanting for the time.

A week later they buried Mrs. Townsend, and Milly was taken to her country house by the western wave, her husband making all arrangements and payments with due and formal care. Then he left her with a wise old aunt who knew exactly how to treat her patient, and in the brightness of a perfect May she became something like her physical self once more. For a time her faculties were almost quiescent, but with returning strength her brain and memory became distressingly active and insistent. What exactly had she been thinking, what saying, what doing at the moment of the crash? The coroner and jury had been kind, the witnesses friendly, the inferences from the known facts favourable, yet in her heart she knew that it was just that little carelessness in the midst of her cynical self-complacency that was responsible for the probable wreck of two lives and the actual loss of three.

Yes; and she could not put aside that last interview with Jenny. Strange, exceeding strange, was the way in which Jenny had spoken, she who in fact had been the more wanton and resolute sinner of the two friends. That she

should make her exit pluckily was natural to her character ; but she had gone gratefully as well, though she had passed in the extremity of pain from the noon of her beauty and her youth. She had been given her chance, she said. Chance, indeed. What of ?

And then there was that other woman of whom they had been talking at the moment of the catastrophe, the woman who had died after bearing a child at about the latest moment possible. She had died not repentant but triumphant, thanking God for her death as for her life, though the life had been full of trouble and travail and the death she had brought upon herself. But then Milly remembered that Jenny had been a "Roman" (though none could have supposed it), while she had heard of the other as an extreme "Anglo," and she imagined that people of that sort, when hard up against it, fell back on the notions of their childhood. Oh, but she remembered a third case, that of her own old governess, to whose last months she had brought comfort when she found her in the direst poverty and dying slowly, practically of a broken heart, owing to the callous fraud of a favourite niece. She had been an old Evangelical of a pronounced type, loving the Lord Jesus as one visible and present and with the Atonement always in her mind. "I expect

you're having a fine life, Millikins," she said, "but don't forget that it's what you feel you can look forward to, not back, that will help you at the end. I've not had a very happy time on earth, but the Lord will be sending for me soon, and He will wipe away all tears from my eyes." And she went on to speak—in her Hackney garret—of the City that has no need of the Sun to light it, the City of which she hoped soon to be made free and from which she would go forth no more.

So, with these three women of such different experience it was not the life that mattered, but its end. Or rather, the life counted only as leading to its end, and the end counted because it was the beginning. Of course she had heard of this theory, but somehow she had never before realized what a grip it had on other people. She was not indifferent to religion—oh no ; but life had always been very full, and it had been quite easy to put off these disturbing speculations to a convenient season. Now the question forced itself on her, were these women right or not ? They had faced their crossings in the assured conviction, two of them, that all was well, and the third, the sinner, that at least all that really mattered was safe. If they were wrong, life was indeed a muddled business : but if they were right, where was she herself ?

How did it stand with her, Millicent, Countess of Sennen? She remembered once having had to listen to a sermon from the text, "What then must I do to be saved?"

At this point she pulled herself together with a violent mental start. She knew very well in her case what answer she would get from those who thought themselves the spokesmen of Him to whom the question was originally put. She had evidently got herself into a sad way with self-reproach about the accident on the top of all her injuries and shock. After all, what did it come to? Just the least trifle of carelessness, such as the most competent did not always escape—no more of a lapse than she had herself probably been guilty of fifty times but on which bad luck had fastened the fifty-first. Certainly it was rough on Jenny and the others; but because of this ill-chance was she seriously to alter her whole way of life on a portentous theory of Sin and Judgment and Retribution, which the wisest of her friends discarded or ignored? Was a woman of her beauty and brains and youth and energy, with the fullest capacity for action and enjoyment, to give up the making of her own life and to conform to the ways of a dolt of a husband, himself unfaithful and of the lowest taste? Was she actually to go back to Sennen's bed (if he gave up his wretched

Topsy) and get him babies and bring them up in what was called godliness : That, however, was what all the priests—of any kind—would tell her. “Oh là là! Quelle idée!” She had picked up a phrase or two in Paris.

This mood of Milly's did not last long, and it was her sense of humour, at all times irrepressible, that brought it to an end. Was she not taking herself rather seriously, almost to the point of theatrical absurdity : It was certainly desirable that she should have a good time and not worry, but she must not make claims in virtue of some prerogative of her exalted personality as a wit, a beauty, and the rest of it. She had met people who were always talking about self-expression and the like, and she heartily despised them. Why could not they do as they damned well chose without all this nauseating jargon : She must take care not to get like them. They were just as great prigs as the pietists, and at any rate some of the latter seemed to know how to carry on through misfortune and pain. For herself she would take a sensible view, accepting life without theorizing, as it was. It was not her fault if men went silly over her. She never led them on. And if she had favoured one or two—well, they were bachelors, and it was no business of other people's, least of all of Sennen's, who was

clearly out of court. But, apart from all this, she would not live selfishly. One could do a lot for the unhappy with a little sympathy and trouble and an open hand. No, she would run her life on reasonable lines, harming no one and avoiding high and useless speculations.

But, alas ! it would not work. She soon saw that it was only an attempt to a comfortable evasion of the main question, which remained unanswered. Were there, or were there not, rules laid down by some Supreme Authority for the observance of men and women with tremendous rewards and penalties behind them ? And now there began a deadly struggle between her strong mind that insisted on the question and her strong will that strove to thrust it aside. She knew that the answer would have to be worked out, sooner or later, by her own reason, but she tried to suspend that reason's action by the narcotics of pleasure and excitement. Meanwhile, her usually serene temper changed very distinctly for the worse. After Whitsuntide she returned to London, and happening to meet her reigning favourite in the street, she abruptly dismissed him in a single sentence, and refused to listen to his professions and reproaches. Next day she wrote to him that she meant what she had said ; that he and she were a worthless pair—which of them was the worse God

knew ; and that if he could find some decent fool of a girl to marry him it was a great deal more than he deserved. Afterwards she doubted if she had been justified in taking quite so high a line, and she read with satisfaction in the Confessions of St. Augustine that after parting dramatically on the sternest principle with one lady friend, he soon felt constrained to find another : so uncertain is the upward path of the ungodly. However, her man was a poor boob, and any question of a successor could stand over. She then proceeded to give up a flat which at Jenny's suggestion they two had shared under a third name for the discreet reception by alternating arrangement of their respective friends. There had been this difference between the two women : Jenny had sought sin and ensued it, Milly slipped into it when it seemed to suit. Her primary tastes were not vicious. Meanwhile, the discarded one swore and blustered. He was a vapid young man, and it was strange how he could have made himself attractive to a brilliant woman, except for some measure of equestrian prowess. He was very angry for perhaps a fortnight, but got over it better than might have been expected. He had in truth already begun to grow weary of a mistress whose brains were so much better than his own.

## II

Milly went through the remainder of the London fashionable season with much exuberance but little relish. One or two of her circle were rather concerned at the wild way she plunged at Ascot, but she had plenty of money of her own, and had never asked help of Sennen—nor of the others. Her facial injuries had been skilfully treated, and were hardly to be noticed, and her magnificent vitality had been apparently restored. At the Royal Garden Party in July she was acclaimed as the fairest of women, yet there were eyes that could see that the beauty of her “lovely spirit face” had been affected—perhaps enhanced—by symptoms of suffering and strain. “Milly’s looking exquisite,” said one observant woman, “but somehow not quite her old sweet self. I wonder if she’s really been touched at last, and by some one who won’t respond.” But this physiognomist did not know that there were two conflicting personalities in Milly, one thirsting for living water in a desert and the other asserting that the thirst was imagined, and that any search to quench it would be in vain.

For the internal battle went on raging. It had never ceased, whatever the distraction or the



attempted anodyne. In the midst of pleasure she tried hard reading and sat up one night with Haeckel, only to tear the book across at sunrise. He might try to explain a lot, but there was that in herself that he could not explain—of this she was quite sure, and she had no faith in him over the rest. Then she tried Jeans, and in spite of much she could not follow, this time she was really bitten. The notion of the Great Mathematician with His harmonious expansions gripped her imagination and approved itself to her reason. But, but, did it bring her any comfort? Would He conceivably have regard to one little entity like herself on one of the planets of one among a million million suns? Her governess would have told her that He could and did, but if only one could be sure of anything.

Next she searched the New Testament in no particular sequence, and was intrigued by the episode of her from whom seven devils had been cast. How many had she herself, and who was qualified to expel them now? Certainly not her rector in Cornwall—the notion made her feel better for the moment—though he was quite a good sort of man. But the woman—it was the same, was it not—had had much forgiven her “because she hath loved much.” Had she, Milly, ever loved at all really, anybody, any-

thing, except her own passing pleasure and caprice : Somehow she could not get away from this Old Book, and at times she was almost persuaded of its truth. At others she felt very differently. There were terrible as well as touching things in it, and she was not going to tremble at being preached at like that cur Felix, however disturbing might be the subjects of the sermon. No, she must go by reason, not emotion. And what hard sayings did she find. "You must be born again." No wonder Nicodemus was startled, and even after the explanation, what could one make of a birth of the spirit ? And then the sixth chapter of St. John. Surely to accept that was the very limit of credulity, and they who "walked no more with Him" did the only thing they reasonably could. And yet men and women by the million did accept it, and had accepted it in all ages, even wise men in high places like the great Lord Chancellor More, as cited by Macaulay. Who was right in anything, and where was truth ?

By the Monday after Goodwood Races she felt that she must solve her problem or go mad. She joined a hectic party at Deauville, but by no means made her expected contribution to their gaiety. She soon felt that she could gladly kill them all for their inanities and scandal,

though, in fact, their talk was no worse, if less witty, than hers had been six months before. She bit off the head of one idiot on the beach who tried some absurd compliment as to a sonnet about her snowy feet on the summer sands. To another who seriously aspired to fill the vacancy she was now known to have created she gave the castigation of his life, which he thought grossly unfair on any reasonable construction of the ethical code by which he was justified in presuming she was guided. It's not as if I were trying to butt in between a loving couple, he thought ruefully. To a third fellow-guest she was unforgivably rude on a slight provocation, and the aggrieved woman acidly retorted that it was evident that the accident in April had had more serious results than had been diagnosed, and that a period of seclusion and mental treatment was clearly indicated. They made it up in a fashion next day, but Milly took herself off prematurely, alone with her maid, to the farther parts of Brittany, to the great relief of the others, among whom there was some amiable speculation as to whom it was likely she was going to meet. In fact, she got away from all her acquaintances, and her worst diversion in her small hotel was her handling of an ineffable vicomte, whom she allowed to develop to the fullness of his fatuity

and then withered as she well knew how. Her trouble left her for the time by some curious reaction, no doubt physical, just as a toothache will sometimes, though the cause of the mischief is not removed. A quiet healthy life in perfect weather seemed to have made another woman of her when towards the end of August she found herself for one night in her London house on her way to a shooting party in Sutherland.

In London, however, a surprise awaited her the day after her arrival. She had thought that her husband was attending York races, while actually he had suddenly decided to cross the Atlantic to study methods on a western ranch, with perhaps a glimpse at Chicago crime. He had arrived in the morning when she was out, and when he heard her let herself in he came out of his little back room, pipe in hand, into the hall. "Oh, it's you, Milly," he said, and after a moment, seeing they were alone, he added, "I may as well tell you that I've seen the last of Topsy Sinclair. She's going to marry an American producer, and I think they'll get on very well. I thought perhaps you'd be interested to know." "Thanks, I'm very much interested," said Milly, and after some exchange of information as to their arrangements they went their several ways without any further remark of consequence.

She had affected to treat the incident lightly, but it completely broke her short-lived calm. All that night as her train roared northward she woke at short intervals to a renewed tempest. Had he meant this announcement as an overture and an offer? Did he really suppose that they could begin again? She had a vision of their first year—his heavy jowled face opposite her at table, his ill-mannered silences, his dull futilities, his uncouth habits, his total inability to cope with her raillery, his silly pained look if she went a little far. How could she be expected to be tied to such a man? And then, of course, he would want an heir. Her one confinement had been pretty awful, and though the doctor had told her that it need never be nearly as bad again, she revolted from the discomfort and inaction which the experience at best entailed. And there might be a series of daughters before a boy arrived. No doubt some women took it differently. She knew one—quite a live sort, too—who was amusingly vain of her seven exhibits and quite ready to make them ten; but, most emphatically and finally, it was not Milly Sennen's line. But then her inconveniently honest mind, which never allowed self-deception for long, began to insist on certain other things. Was Sennen so contemptible after all? One way and another she had heard a good deal in

his favour—his staunchness as a friend, his generosity to the unfortunate, the sound conclusions of his slow intellect, his shrewdness and integrity in business and on the turf. Even his constancy to his appalling mistress was an asset of a sort, and need he ever have been impelled to seek her if his wife had been decently affectionate and tactful? And again, and above all, if the Christian theological notions were right, it was part of the game that you might—probably would—have to suffer, and many a woman had worse to face than a dull husband and a few confinements. But then was this high theory right, that was the whole point and she could not settle it, and so she rocked and tossed and swayed, mind and body, in her narrow berth, and it was a once more tortured woman who stepped on to the platform at Inverstrachan to join a party who presumably cared for none of these things.

In this, however, Milly was mistaken. The party was large and rather oddly assorted, there being some of the ultra-smart kind like herself, others of the hard-bitten, purely sporting type, and several oddments who could not so easily be classified. Among them was an old politician named Hobart, who had risen high in the counsels of the State but who had been left out of office lately owing to the exigencies of a new

coalition. He was a grizzled, bearded, unobtrusive man of no very striking presence, whose abilities in general company were not easy to evoke. He was still, within limits, an ardent sportsman, but a badly sprained ankle had made him shorten his stay, and had left him, before his departure, alone in the house with Milly, who was not feeling well, the morning after her arrival. She carelessly took up the *Hibbert Journal* which he had been reading, and was soon absorbed in an article on the Early Church, but puzzled by some Latin quotations which it contained. These she brought to Hobart to translate, and this he did very readily, adding some explanations about Tertullian, the Novatians and other matters, which she received with an interest which surprised him. "I did not know you cared about theology," he said. "I don't know that I do really," she answered, "but somehow one can't get away from it sometimes." "I should have thought that most people—say, most of our fellow guests—managed to get away from it only too easily," he rejoined. "Perhaps, but one never quite knows," was her comment.

Then there was a pause as she lit a cigarette, and as she looked at his kind, experienced face there came over her one of those impulses to confession which sometimes arise more easily

between strangers than between friends. She began slowly, in a strained voice and with averted eyes, and this is the dialogue that followed :

“ Mr. Hobart, may I talk to you a little ? ”

“ Not a little, but for as long as you like and on anything you like. To-day we’re both idlers thrown together.”

“ I expect you’ve heard stories about me, haven’t you ? ”

“ Well, as you ask me, I have. But not with a shred of evidence to make me believe them.”

“ They are true. At least enough is true to make the rest hardly matter. I am a confirmed adulteress—and with three men.”

“ It’s not my business to judge you, and I don’t.” Then after another pause, “ I suppose you did not tell me this just for information, did you ? ”

“ No, it’s all part of what I said about theology. You see I’ve come to hate my life after a great shock I had this year. But I don’t know how I’m to go on. It wouldn’t be easy to go straight, but I might do it if I had religion. As it is, I don’t know what to believe or where to begin. It’s no good trusting to something you can’t be sure of. It wouldn’t even be honest, would it ? Mr. Hobart, are you a Christian ? Do you really believe it all ? ”

“ I am a Christian, and I do believe it all.



It's the only thing that fits and explains or makes it sure that there is an explanation of all that's so dark and difficult about us."

"Fits and explains ! Does anything fit and can anything be explained ? "

"I think it can. This is how I look at it. If you travelled with a map in a country unknown to you and you found the map accurate as the journey went on, you'd trust to it for the rest, wouldn't you ? That's how Christianity has been to me. It explains pain, it explains sacrifice. It justifies taking the long view. It prevents one thinking too much of oneself and other things that moulder. When I've broken its rules, I've been wretched. When I've kept its rules, I've been fundamentally happy, even under very unhappy conditions. So I say, when the map has been justified by so much within my vision I trust it for what's beyond." Hobart stopped, surprised at himself. He could be voluble enough in the House or on the platform, but for him to talk thus in private was rare indeed.

"I suppose it's come easy to you," objected Milly, "because you grew up on religion. I was never taught anything properly, though one governess I had did try. I don't expect I could read your map. Nothing at all fits with me. Can I ever get at the truth, and how ? "

"Why not begin at the other end? I think myself that if you go straight the belief will come. And there's no harm in praying even hypothetically, if you understand me, on the chance of being heard, rather like the Athenians and their unknown god. You can't be sure you *won't* be heard and it would not do you any harm. But let me ask you this, where exactly does Sennen come in?"

"Ah, that is just the difficulty. He's not been much good himself, though he might have been different if I had been decent to him at the beginning. I rather think now he'd like to start again—there's no one in the way now; but I am afraid there's a sort of natural antipathy on my side and besides, I dread the idea of babies."

"Well, it's all a hard saying, but if you mean business you'll face it. I should say you had not will power enough and you must concentrate it against yourself. I doubt if it will be as bad as you think. Anyhow, you can't always get away from suffering, and I don't believe you'll ever suffer more than I expect you've been doing lately."

"I hope you're right there. It has been double hell. But if I am to do as you want me, how am I to go about it? I suppose I must go on my knees to Sennen?"

"Not on your knees, but go somehow," and

## THOUGHTS AND FANCIES

being accustomed to quick drafting he soon produced the following :

MY DEAR JACK,

You will be surprised to hear that I've taken religion more or less, and want to try to live according. We've been rather a pair of rotters, but couldn't we make a fresh start together? There's no special impediment now on my side, and I gather there is none on yours. I will try to play the game if you will.

"That will do it if it's done at all, but you must put in that I'm the worse rotter of the two." This he did. "The point is, *can* I play the game. Well, I'll take your words away with me, and see if I can get myself up to the scratch."

"Take my prescription, and go through with it." He became imperative as he went on, and spoke quite like a confidential doctor. "At the same time, don't overdo it. Do the one big thing but keep up your ordinary amusements. And don't go dowdy over it. As you must know, your beauty is exceptional, and it can be a power on the right side as well as otherwise."

"I don't think there's much beauty to-day,

exceptional or otherwise," said Milly, and indeed she looked haggard in the glass. "Anyhow, whatever happens, I am very very grateful to you and always shall be, for trying to help a wicked and unhappy woman." And at that she gave him her slender strong hand, and he gave it a hard paternal sort of grip as he saw the tears welling in her eyes. And so the strange conversation ended.

Milly went upstairs and had the cry of her life, and felt very much the better after it. She did not appear again that day, but next morning was something like her radiant self. Meanwhile, Hobart sank back in his chair and lit a pipe with trembling hands, the episode having disturbed him sadly. It was not in the least in his way of business to be the confessor of beautiful sinful women, and he doubted if he had done it well. However, he ate a good lunch in solitude and then departed on his southward way, and as things fell out he never again exchanged a word or line with Milly. It was an odd case of "ships that pass and speak"—though not exactly in the night.

She stayed ten days at Inverstrachan and left an impression very different from that she had made on her Deauville friends. The great beauty was absolutely charming, thought one nice enthusiastic girl, and this view was general.

She gave herself not the least bit of airs, and one felt one could say anything to her without being snubbed. And what a figure, face, hair, everything ! There was nothing about her that was not too divinely lovely. Surely the dreadful things one heard vaguely of her could not possibly be true. Milly had indeed recovered her balance and her looks, because she was conscious that her strife was ending—how it was ending seemed a lesser thing. As the days passed she became sure of her decision, which she took at last with a sense of resignation that was almost grateful. That kind old fellow with his uncompromising advice and queer religious philosophy had shown her a way which might lead her to conviction and to peace. The way was arid and steep and arduous, but she would try it : anything was better than the last few months. So it was with a relatively tranquil heart that at the hotel at Crewe on her long journey home to Cornwall she copied out Hobart's draft, and by the time she had posted it to Sennen in the States she had become definitely seized of the notion of duty for the first time in her thirty years. There was a law, and it behoved her to obey it whether its origin and sanctions were of God or man. To have got so far meant much with Milly, as she was never the woman to look back.

## III

That year in southern England, and particularly in Cornwall, there was a wonderful extension of summer. Day after day the sun rose in mist, broke through to a July noontide and set in crimson glory, radiating over land and sea. The beauty around her and the soft western air fitted well with Milly's mood of tired acquiescence in what she now knew was right and had to be. She lived languidly in the splendid hour, thinking little of Sennen's coming answer and her own commitments. Her only guests were a dull family of poor cousins whose amusements she arranged for with easy kindness without much call upon her time. She would go down to the shore alone with a book and bathe at her leisure from one or other of several places where she could change unseen, and at low tide she would paddle idly along the coast, her white feet gleaming in the surf. One afternoon when she had thus gone farther than usual and after a long swim, she realized that she was tired, and lying down upon the sand she was soon in a deep and dreamless sleep. When she awoke she was conscious of a change about her. There was a big bank of cloud over the sea and a strong wind blowing inshore, a

warm enervating wind, something like the "föhn" she had known when ski-ing, and surely the belt of sand on which she sat seemed strangely narrow. What, after five already! She must have slept for a good two hours.

And then she saw she was not alone. There was another woman coming towards her from the opposite direction, a pretty young woman with a darling little girl. "Oh," inquired the stranger, "can you tell me where we can find a path up? We have been out longer than we thought, and we can't get back the way we came. And, well, we can't swim, and I don't quite like it."

"It's the same with me," said Milly. "I've been asleep and didn't know how late it was. Stop a minute, let me think. We'll find a way somewhere."

She looked right and left at the encroaching waves, the narrowing sands, the beetling cliffs. The woman had said there was no way forward, and she herself was clear that there was no way back; she could see the breakers high upon the rocks at a distant point they would have to round. But was there not a track up somewhere? No, she remembered distinctly there was nothing, nothing at all between the places from which she and the others had started. But then there must surely be some ledge or some-

thing in which they could take shelter. She scanned the cliff above her closely, and her eyes rested on a kind of niche, hardly more than a crack in the cliff face, which must be above high tide, though not much, and must be accessible, though not easily. Ah, that was the place an old fisherman had once spoken of as the only shelter a cat could get into at high tide for miles along that stretch of coast. But it was very small indeed. Could more than one person get into it? The fisherman had said not. Well, yes, a slim woman and a child; but by no possibility would it take three.

And then it came like a flash to Milly that here was offered her her great chance. What, *that*; not really *that*? Yes, that and nothing else. Stay, one must not be prematurely dramatic. Was there actually no alternative? No, in very truth, none at all; it was indeed "the only way," and she would take it. She had lived ill, but she could die well, and she would. And then she acted with swift decision.

"Look, I've got it. Do you see that little opening? You must get up there with the child. Yes, you can. I'll help you. Nonsense, you must do it. I know it won't hold three, but I can swim and you can't. I'm Lady Sennen, and I know the coast, and you don't. And, if it did come to an accident, which it won't,



you've a child and I haven't. Get into your bathing dress, and I'll do the same." Each carried one. "It'll be better both for scrambling or swimming, and you must go barefoot to get a grip. I'll get your things up afterwards. Please get on. We mustn't waste time." Milly's object was to confuse and hustle, and the bewildered woman could do nothing but obey.

By great good fortune they found a rope, connected probably with some former use of the niche above, and Milly tied one end round her companion. Then the latter, under continuous voluble directions, got up on Milly's shoulders and with much scrambling and clinging and gripping by the toes she succeeded in making good her ascent. Then she let down the other end of the rope, and Milly tied it very carefully round the child and held the little thing high above her head in her lovely strong arms, and the mother drew the rope in slowly to avoid bumping, and so the two were brought to safety.

"Now for the clothes. Let down one end again and I'll make a bundle. Yes, I'm putting in my things with yours. A skirt and shoes are no use to swim in, and you had better keep everything for me. I'm ready now, pull up. Good. Put on anything extra you can. It'll be chilly before you get away. I'm glad there

are some chocolates with your things. It won't really be so long if you don't think about it, and it'll be something for your girl to talk about. Let me know when you can come to lunch. Now I must be going. Good-bye and good luck. Don't worry about me. I shall win through all right." But she did not say whereunto she would win through.

When she got out of sight round the first corner she laughed aloud. The recollection had come back to her of a ridiculous actor who had so overplayed the part of Sydney Carton that she and her party had nearly been ejected for excess of mirth. It was droll to think that now she was in that very same position, and a real one. It was really too whimsical for words. And she wondered how Sennen would take it. With conscientious solemnity, she felt sure, but after a bit he would be mightily relieved and would find a much better wife. That, indeed, should not be difficult. And again her invincible humour overcame her.

But when she had rounded a farther point to where she stood on a wider margin of sand, a lonely slim figure in her scanty garb, she took stock very soberly of her situation. Of her it might be said as of another that "the proud head that never hung for shame, did not hang now for fear"; but there was more than

pride and courage in her gaze at the waves that were advancing to her death. For now she knew beyond all question that the Great Mathematician in the midst of His expansions had taken thought of little Milly, with her futile little doubtings and her sinful little ways. And there came over her a deep thankfulness that she would be spared the dreaded years that had been in prospect, with all their risk of fresh transgressions. Now her sins were all behind her, and soon would be made white. Somehow it seemed too easy, but she had read in that *Hibbert* article about the baptism by blood and she supposed that many of those Pagan converts had lived no better than herself. To them, as to her, the way had been made clear when the time was very short.

Now, how should she meet her end? There was not a millionth chance that she could get right out round the farther rocks against that wind and a flowing tide, to say nothing of the currents. Still it was her duty to try, and it were idle to wait shivering where she was, to be broken against the wall of the cliff. So she knelt and prayed—fair face in fair hands—the best prayer she could to Him of whom she had learnt so little but who was now not wholly the Unknown God, and then she rose and waded through the surf and struck out boldly into the

deep. But, of course, it was quite hopeless, and for all her resolution and strength and skill it was not really long before the waves had closed over her, and she had paid the price of forgiveness by the love than which no man hath a greater.

By some happy peculiarity of the currents her body was not battered against the rocks, but was cast up unblemished in a little cove where there were a dozen houses and a jetty and an inn. "Who is this and what is here?" and they ran together and gathered round her like the fairy lady in the strange old tale. And anon they bore her in honour to her home and they buried her more in pride than sorrow, for the woman who was saved (and was brave too, but had her child to think of) had told the whole story at the inquest, and the fame of the deed was spread abroad on the ether even to the uttermost parts of the earth. And the rector preached really beautifully, and all the chapels were no less kind and the voices of the malicious were all stilled. Then her husband returned and put a memorial window in the church—in surprisingly good taste—and the county subscribed for a monument on the cliff, and it has an inscription which very much touches Sennen's nice new bride whenever she goes that way. Also there

was much talk of a new lifeboat to be called the *Millicent*, but this has not matured.

Very soon legends began to multiply round her memory. Her beauty could hardly be exaggerated, but grotesque stories are current of her strength and prowess and her ravagings of the hearts of men. Evil tongues have wagged again, and the exact truth is known to few; but on the whole the better part predominates, and good Cornish mothers tell their girls that verily this was a valiant woman in whose steps they must walk should the call ever come. But while the tangle of truth and fiction becomes ever harder to unravel, old Hobart, who knows most and was lately caught praying at her grave, says that just two things about her, namely, that she had a lovely face and that God in His mercy lent her grace, are enough to sum her up for record. And at that may be left the story of Millicent, Countess of Sennen.